STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF

JOHN WESLEY

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To

MY WIFE

whose faith, courage, and cheerfulness have been to me an unfailing source of inspiration and encouragement, this volume is affectionately inscribed.

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FOREWORD.

THIS volume does not profess to be a complete biography of the great founder of Methodism, but only a series of studies in his life. These studies are so arranged, however, as to give the main outlines and the striking features of his marvelous career. I have endeavored as far as possible to set down the events in their historical order, but as the narrative progresses the details of the story become so complex as to require much overlapping of one chapter upon another. Yet I trust that the studies, taken together, will make the impression of a harmonious whole rather than a series of more or less disjointed essays.

The reader who is acquainted with the life of Wesley need not expect to find here any new materal, but only such an arrangement and interpretation of familiar facts as seemed to the author best suited for giving to the student of Church history a fairly adequate understanding of the character and work of the founder of Methodism.

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF JOHN WESLEY was originally written as a text in the Methodist Founders' Series edited by Bishop Warren A. Candler. (This will account for the valuable editorial note found on pages 166 and 167.) In view, however, of the wide and continued demand for it, the publishers have decided to issue it as a separate volume.

NASHVILLE, TENN., December 1, 1928.

CHAPTER I.

Providential Preparation.

"We know through the admirable labors of Mr. Galton," remarks Charles Darwin, "that genius, which implies a wonderfully complex combination of high faculties, tends to be inherited." Perhaps scientific men to-day would not be quite so confident in making this assertion as was Mr. Darwin; but whatever doubt there may be as to the immediate transmission from parent to child of that "wonderfully complex combination of high qualities" which he denominates genius, it is quite certain that family traits and tendencies may be developed and handed down from generation to generation, if the process be not counteracted by the introduction through intermarriage of unfavorable strains. The observation that a man's training ought to begin with his great-grandmother should be so modified as to include all of his great-grandmothers and his great-grandfathers too. Being descended from long lines of cultured and pious ancestors on both the paternal and maternal sides is a matter of no small import in one's life. This is one of God's ways of bringing into being individuals possessed of those rare latent qualities which make it possible for them, under the influence of the Holy Spirit and by wise nurture and training, to develop into saints and spiritual leaders. The idea that there was in some real sense a providential preparation for the coming of John Wesley does not, therefore, seem to me far-fetched or unreasonable.

The Wesley family has been traced back to Baron William de Wellesley, who was a member of Parliament in 1339. His second son, Sir Richard, founded the Irish branch of the family, from which was descended Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington. Sir Herbert, a grandson of Sir William, was the father of Bartholomew Westley, the great-grandfather of the founder of Methodism. Bartholomew Westley and his only son, John, were both graduates of Oxford University, were both men of culture and deep piety, both became dissenting ministers, and were both evicted from their livings and subjected to shameful persecution after the passage of the Act of Uniformity in 1662. John Westley, after being driven from place to place, finally became pastor of a small independent congregation at Poole, where he spent the closing years of his life. He died in 1678, leaving a widow and a large family of children, among whom were two sons—Matthew, who became a prominent physician in London, and Samuel, who was for thirty-eight years rector at Epworth. At the time of his father's death Samuel Wesley, as the name came now to be spelled, was sixteen years old. He had been trained in the free school at Dorchester, and was almost ready to enter the university, but had no means with which to defray his expenses, his mother having been left, upon the death of her husband, in extreme poverty. Some dissenting friends, however, took the matter in hand and sent him to a school in London to be trained for the Nonconformist ministry. His mother heartily acquiesced in this plan for the future of her son. She was the daughter of

Rev. John White, a distinguished Puritan divine, and a niece of Dr. Fuller, the Church historian. The ties which bound her to the Nonconformist cause, therefore, were unusually strong. She had suffered for it and had seen those whom she loved suffer for it. But both she and those friends who, with her, were counting on her promising son to become a doughty champion of dissent were doomed to disappointment. After a year in London, this son and grandson of ejected ministers suddenly made up his mind to cast in his lot with the Church which had persecuted his fathers. He was living at the time with his mother and an elderly aunt, both of whom he knew would be deeply grieved on account of his change and would stoutly oppose his carrying out the resolution which he had secretly formed. But being fully determined not to be balked in his purpose, he arose early one morning, quietly stole away from his home, and trudged on foot to Oxford, where he entered himself as a servitor in Exeter College. He had but two pounds, five shillings in his purse when his college course began, and so was compelled to meet his expenses partly by teaching and partly by his pen. He faced his difficulties, however, with characteristic Wesley pluck, and left the university at the end of his course with ten pounds, although he had received from his friends during the five years of his residence but five shillings. He received his Bachelor's degree in June, 1688. Six years later he was made an M.A. by Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

For a short while after leaving Oxford he served as a curate in London, and then for several months

more as chaplain of a man-of-war, a position which he resigned for another London curacy. In August, 1690, he became rector of the little parish of South Ormsby, whence he removed in February, 1697, to Epworth. Here he remained as rector until his death in 1735. During his second curacy in London he was united in marriage to Susanna Annesley, the twenty-fifth child of Dr. Samuel Annesley, one of the leading dissenting ministers of his day. She was a young woman of winsome personality, engaging manners, and unusual strength both of mind and character. Her father, who was a man of generous culture, looked after her intellectual as well as her spiritual training. The stories told of her indicate that she was a marvel of precocity. "She knew Greek, Latin, and French," says Fitchett, "while yet in her teens, was saturated with theology, reasoned herself into Socinianism and out of it, and generally had a taste for abstruse knowledge which, in these soft-fibered, modern days, is almost unintelligible." At the tender age of thirteen she dispassionately reviewed the controversy between Dissent and the Church, and, despite the influence of early teaching and association, decided for the latter. She was clearly her husband's superior, not only in soundness of judgment and poise and balance of character, but also in intellectual breadth and acumen.

The latter, however, was by no means such a narrow, bigoted, and stubborn egotist as he has been represented, although there is a sufficient basis of fact to lend to this representation a semblance of truth. He was hot-tempered, impractical, and destitute of

humor, and had a self-confident and bumptious way of asserting his opinions, administering his reproofs, and exercising his authority that must often have been quite irritating. He was somewhat of a tyrant both in his home and in his parish, and, as a consequence, was for many years in almost perpetual trouble with those over whom he had spiritual oversight. They tortured his children, spoiled his fields, destroyed his cattle, and finally burned his house. He spent much of his time and a large part of his meager income in writing and publishing books which nobody read and in holding long debates with his brother clergymen in Convocation, while his heroic and devoted wife was left at home to look after the affairs of the parish and provide as best she could for the support and education of her children.

Still, this is but one side of Samuel Wesley's character. There is another side which should not be overlooked. Though narrowed by his one-sided attention to controversial theology, he was a man of scholarly tastes and was not without a spark of genius. He was noble-minded, courageous, and deeply and sincerely religious. When his sons wrote him from Oxford about the persecutions to which they were subjected on account of their connection with the Holy Club, he commended them for the course they were pursuing and encouraged them to persevere in spite of opposition; and during all the years of their early manhood he was their trusted counselor both as to matters of belief and conduct. That he fully deserved the confidence they imposed in him is made clear by a large number of extant letters which he

wrote them during their college days. These letters show that he was a man of singularly sound judgment in regard to all points involving ethical issues. His advice was never unworthy of a minister of Jesus Christ. His defects were temperamental peculiarities rather than moral obliquities. No consideration of mere personal gain could have induced him to compromise his convictions.

CHAPTER II.

Providential Training.

I.

John, the fifteenth of the nineteen children of Samuel and Susanna Wesley, was born at Epworth, a small Lincolnshire village, June 28, 1703. The brief review of his family history given above shows that the best blood of England flowed in his veins. He was the offspring of a long line of cultured and pious ancestors, and the traditions of culture and piety which had been handed down from his grandparents and great-grandparents were faithfully maintained by his own father and mother. Of the nineteen children born to them, three sons and eight daughters lived to maturity. There seems to have been no school at Epworth which they deemed worthy of their patronage, and, as the meagerness of the family income made it impossible for them to send their daughters to boarding school, it became necessary to provide for their entire education in the home, the parents themselves being the sole teachers. But so diligently and faithfully did they perform their task that all these daughters became women of more than ordinary culture. The sons likewise were taught at home until they were ready to enter the secondary schools in which they were to be prepared for the university, and in this home training were developed those scholarly tastes for which all three of them became distinguished in after years.

I have spoken of husband and wife as coöperating in the education of their children, and so they did. It will be remembered, however, that Samuel Wesley, besides looking after his parish duties, devoted much of his time to writing and spent much more of it in attending long sittings of Convocation in London. Naturally, therefore, the greater part of the responsibility of keeping up the school in the Epworth household fell upon the mother. Without intending it, without even knowing it, she took that place of leadership in the home for which her thorough sanity and superior force of character fitted her, and her personality became the dominant force in determining its spirit.

The intelligent and purposeful way in which she went about the business of educating her children is set forth in a letter written to John Wesley at his special request in 1732. This letter shows that her plan provided for the systematic development of their intellectual, moral, and religious natures; and the patience, diligence, and thoroughness with which she carried out this plan have been the marvel of succeeding generations.

The educational process began with each child on the day of its birth. Each was at once put into a regular method of living in such things as he was capable of, his dressing, undressing, eating, and sleeping all being regulated by a strict system of rules. "When turned a year old they were taught to fear the rod and to cry softly, by which means they escaped abundance of correction they might otherwise have had, and that most odious noise, the crying of children, was seldom heard in the house."

On the day after his fifth birthday each child became a member of the little school which for more than twenty years was carried on in the Wesley home with as much system and order as the best-regulated grammar school in a modern city. The school hours were from nine till twelve and from two till five, and during these hours each pupil was held strictly to his work.

The process of distinctively religious education began in infancy, the children being taught the Lord's Prayer as soon as they could speak, and required thereafter to repeat it at rising and at bedtime. As they grew older they were taken through a thorough course of instruction in the Bible and the doctrines of the Church and carefully trained in habits of devotion. One hour out of every week was set apart by the mother for special prayer and religious conversation with each of them.

II.

In any attempt to estimate the forces that entered into the making of John Wesley's life the first place must be given to his mother's influence. There can be no question as to her right to a place among the great and noble of the earth. In courage, self-command, strength of will, tenacity of purpose, profound religious earnestness, and steadfast and heroic devotion to duty, she has had few equals either among men or women. And the quality of her intellect was as rare as that of her spirit. A woman who, besides bearing, nursing, and training a large family of children, attending for twenty-five years to all the affairs of her household, and working incessantly at the

problem of making both ends meet on a meager and uncertain income, could manage to keep herself so well informed as to be able to hold high converse with her university-trained sons on abstruse questions of theology and philosophy must certainly have possessed a mind of rare vigor.

And John Wesley was his mother's own son, inheriting not a few of her striking traits and characteristics both spiritual and intellectual. Bishop McTyeire speaks of her as having transmitted to him "her genius for learning, for order, for government, and, I might also say, for godliness." Moreover, this natural likeness was increased by an unconscious process of imitation. That she should impress herself profoundly upon a child so strikingly like her in temper and spirit is precisely what an intelligent observer might have anticipated. John Wesley was not a man to wear his heart on his coat sleeve. There was something almost stoical in the stern control which he habitually exercised over his feelings. And yet, reading between the lines, it is easy to discern not only his intense devotion to his mother, but also his lofty admiration for her. To him she remained always the queen among women. What more natural, therefore, than that he should adopt her opinions and unconsciously shape his life after the pattern which her character furnished? In her noble and forceful personality, her heroic example, and her thorough and faithful training we discover the chief explanation on the human side of her son's greatness.

To make any mention of the limitations of one who combined in herself so many excellences or of the

defects in the process of a family government in which there is so much to commend may strike the reader as a needless, not to say an ungracious, business. But some knowledge of these limitations and defects is quite as necessary to a thorough understanding of Wesley's life as is a knowledge of those traits for which Mrs. Wesley is so justly admired and honored. For, as in the latter we find one of the chief secrets of his greatness, so in the former we find the explanation of some of his most conspicuous failings as well as some of the most serious difficulties he encountered in his long quest for spiritual freedom.

Attention has already been called to the fact that when still in her teens Mrs. Wesley decided to give up the Puritanism in which she had been brought up and to cast in her lot with the Established Church. Deliberate as her action seems to have been, however, the change was largely superficial. In spirit, and fundamentally in belief also, she remained thoroughly Puritan almost to the end of her life. While rejecting "the doctrine of predestination as maintained by the rigid Calvinists as very shocking and to be abhorred," she retained the Calvinistic conception of the divine nature and government. In her thinking the love of the Eternal Father was overshadowed by the awful majesty of the Omnipotent Sovereign of the universe. Faith, to her, was assent to all the propositions of the Old and New Testaments, and the Christian life consisted rather in strict obedience to a compendium of divine precepts than in sweet, glad fellowship with Christ in a life of service. She knew nothing in all those earlier years of that freedom and joyousness of faith which

Methodism has from the beginning gloried in proclaiming. Absolute certainty of pardon, she supposed, "we can never have till we come to heaven," the best we may hope for on earth being a reasonable persuasion growing out of reflection on the evidences of our own sincerity.

In all this we see the lingering influence of her Puritan training. But along with it she held to the High Church view of the magical efficacy of the sacraments. She taught her children, for example, that their sins had been washed away in baptism; and even after his spiritual emancipation John Wesley gravely records that he had not sinned away the washing of the Holy Ghost given him in baptism till he was about ten years old.

But Puritanism is a temper and mental attitude as well as a system of doctrine. What a man thinks about God will determine his whole view of life and the world. A hard and narrow theology and the spirit which Matthew Arnold speaks of as characterized by "sweetness and light" do not generally go together. An earnest and conscientious person who thinks of himself as living under the omniscient eye of a stern and exacting Taskmaster is not likely to find much time for indulging in laughter or for enjoying the milder aspects of beauty which belong to the world about him. To him life will appear as something altogether too grim and awful to permit the indulgence of those lighter moods which we have come to regard as necessary in order to preserve the sanity and balance of the soul. Because of certain peculiarities of her mental constitution, Mrs. Wesley was

even more a Puritan in spirit than in theology. She was lacking in that quality of imagination which enables one to see things in their true proportions and relations, and in that genial sense of humor which helps to smooth out the roughness of life and to irradiate its somber aspects. And it was but natural that one possessed of such mental characteristics should, under the influence of a hard theology, have acquired more or less of sternness and austerity both of temper and manner.

Of course all this was bound to show itself in Mrs. Wesley's educational methods. She was not to blame for not understanding childhood. The science of genetic psychology had not yet been born; and it is not strange that at that time one whose own childhood had been so abnormally serious and precocious should have adopted without question the generally accepted view that boys and girls are only little men and women and should be expected to think and feel and act precisely as do their elders. Conscientious and painstaking, therefore, as was her process of religious training, it is quite evident that it was defective in two directions: on one side it tended to repress much that is normal and wholesome in child nature, and on the other it sought to impose upon the young experiences and modes of thought which belong only to mature minds.

That the consequences were in some cases tragic is not surprising. These family tragedies, unspeakably sad because they were the results, not of neglect, but of misguided earnestness, we pass over in silence. Mrs. Wesley's stern and thoroughgoing methods, how-

ever, so far fell in with the natural bent of a number of her children as, in spite of their defects, to produce the noblest results. This was especially true in the case of her sons, and particularly of that son who so much resembled her in genius and spirit. And yet even in him we shall discover later on certain odd mental characteristics and unfortunate mental attitudes which are directly traceable to the atmosphere that he breathed in his childhood and to the teaching that he received at his mother's knee. Indeed, the long spiritual struggle through which he passed after he came to manhood was clearly the result of a serious misreading of some of the great fundamental doctrines of the Bible into which he had been led by this early teaching. The more harmful theological errors he abandoned either before or soon after his evangelical conversion; but there were other mistaken notions of less vital significance which continued to exert their influence upon him during most of his life.

It may be worth while to add, however, that if we had to make choice between the strenuous methods of training adopted by Mrs. Wesley and the loose, haphazard, half-hearted methods all too common among Christian parents to-day, there can be no doubt as to where the choice should fall. The old-time Puritan training had at least the merit of being serious, thorough, purposeful. And it made men of heroic mold, men who, like the sturdy Pilgrim Fathers that settled our New England shores, like Cromwell's Ironsides before whom the tyrants of all Europe trembled, had convictions so deep and vital that it was worth while to suffer, to fight, and, if need be, to die for them.

In comparison with such men the soft-fibered skeptics that many of our so-called Christian homes are turning out to-day appear small and contemptible. By all means let us have "sweetness and light," if we may; but let us not secure them at the sacrifice of that great moral earnestness and rugged strength which are essential elements in that kind of militant manhood which is needed in the age-long conflict against the forces of evil.

Again, in studying the childhood training of Wesley and the type of manhood which it produced, it will be well for us to take into consideration the time in which he lived and the conditions in the midst of which he was to do his work. It was the eighteenth and not the twentieth century; and an eighteenth century reformer must be in some essential respects an eighteenth century man. He must be far enough ahead of it to be able to discern its more serious errors and shortcomings and to lead the way to something higher and better, but he must be close enough to it to sympathize with its deepest aspirations, and perhaps also to share somewhat its limitations. A man like Phillips Brooks, with all his spiritual exaltation and insight, would have made small headway with the colliers of Kingswood and Newcastle and the unwashed multitudes of eighteenth century London. There would have been no point of contact between them. Judging by twentieth century standards, it is easy to criticise Wesley for his credulity and even his narrowness in certain directions; but, after all, were not the very things we are inclined to criticise elements of his marvelous success in reaching the men of his

time? Looking at him thus, we see that he was a providential man, and so conclude that the training that made him was providential also. The very spiritual struggles through which he passed on his way to freedom were doubtless a part of his preparation for his great mission.

III.

There were, besides parental influence and training, certain childhood experiences which left their permanent impress upon Wesley's mind and character.

1. The shadow of poverty was ever upon the humble Epworth home. When the son was but three years old, his father was committed to Lincoln jail for debt for a period of three months. Doubtless the lad, almost from his earliest recollection, must have known something of the burden of sorrow and anxiety borne by his beloved and revered mother; and it is quite certain that all through his childhood he was trained to habits of frugality and self-denial. One of the results of this early training is seen in the resolution formed soon after his graduation from Lincoln College—a resolution which he kept in spirit, if not in letter, throughout his entire subsequent life — to live on twenty-eight pounds a year and devote the remainder of his income, whatever it might be, to charity.

2. The story of the burning of the Epworth rectory when Wesley was a lad of six and of his almost miraculous rescue are familiar to all who know anything about his life. The experience, all the circumstances of which he remembered to the end of his life, registered itself ineffaceably on his imagination. It seemed

to mark him out for some remarkable providential destiny. He was "a brand plucked from the burning," and plucked for some special purpose. "His theology," remarks Fitchett, "translated itself into the terms of that night scene. The burning house was the symbol of a perishing world. Each human soul, in Wesley's thought, was represented by that fire-girt child, with the flames of sin, and of that divine and eternal anger which unrepenting sin kindles, closing around it. He who had been plucked from the burning house at midnight must pluck men from the flames of a more dreadful fire."

3. Another familiar story of the Wesley household is that of certain strange and unaccountable noises by which it was frequently disturbed during the closing months of 1716 and the first of the following year. Various attempts have been made to explain these noises, all of which are purely conjectural. Their significance for this narrative, however, lies in the fact that, whatever may have been their real cause, all the members of the Wesley family, the father and mother included, were thoroughly convinced that they were of supernatural origin. John Wesley was at school in London at the time, but full accounts of their experiences were written him by his mother and sisters, and his replies show not only that he was deeply interested in their stories, but also that he cordially accepted their view as to the nature of the weird and uncanny occurrences they related. The family correspondence touching these events reveals a degree of superstition that we find it difficult at this day to understand. Perhaps we have here a hint as to the expla-

nation of that strange vein of credulity which was so marked a peculiarity of Wesley's mind, and of his almost morbid interest in all sorts of grewsome and abnormal experiences. At any rate it is quite evident that the remarkable occurrences made an impression upon Wesley the effects of which remained with him throughout his life.

CHAPTER III.

The Testing Time.

I.

As soon as the sons in the Wesley family were old enough to leave home, arrangements were made for continuing their education in the best schools that the kingdom afforded. Samuel, the eldest, was sent to Westminster in 1704, and thence to Oxford University. After his graduation he returned to Westminster as usher, a position which he continued to hold for a number of years.

In February, 1714, John entered the Charterhouse School, in London, having been appointed to a free scholarship by the Duke of Buckingham. Two years later Charles entered at Westminster, so that for several years the three brothers were in London together.

To pass from the guarded seclusion of a religious home into the life of a great public school is likely to prove about as severe a test of a boy's mettle as any experience of which we can conceive.

What manner of lad young Wesley was when he entered Charterhouse we have abundant material for judging. As a child he was uncommonly grave and serious. He early adopted the habit of never doing anything without careful consideration. His father once declared to Mrs. Wesley that he did not believe "Jack would attend to the most pressing necessities of nature without he could first give a reason for it." On another occasion he said to the lad himself: "Child,

you think to carry everything by dint of argument; but you will find how little is ever done in the world by close reason."

In his Journal, under date of September 16, 1760, Wesley speaks of himself as having been in some measure serious in religion since he was six years old. That he developed a rather unusual type of child piety is shown by the fact that his father, who had extreme High Church notions in regard to such matters, admitted him to the communion when he was only eight. His mother in one of her letters gives a glimpse of him a year later. In the spring of 1712 John and four more of the children had smallpox. In her account of this experience sent to her husband, who was then in London, Mrs. Wesley says: "Jack has borne his disease bravely, like a man, and, indeed, like a Christian, without any complaint."

II.

How did this serious, clear-eyed boy stand the tests which his strange, new life brought him? It has been quite the fashion with biographers to represent him as having shown himself altogether insufficient for it. Tyerman disposes of the matter with the dogmatic declaration: "John Wesley entered the Charterhouse a saint and left it a sinner." Nothing could be more misleading than this statement. In the first place, to speak of a child of ten as a saint betrays an unaccountable lack of understanding of the normal experiences of child life. A child may be truly and vitally religious; but if he is a normal child, he must be religious as a child, and not as an adult. The spiritual atti-

tude which belongs to sainthood is as unnatural to him as the child's view-point to a man of seventy. Doubtless John Wesley was a lad of more than ordinary seriousness; and yet he was not one of your weazen, sickly, premature saints, but a real, warm-blooded, healthy boy with a boy's tastes and instincts and limitations; and it was but natural that, when the pressure of maternal authority was removed, he should have allowed himself more latitude in the indulgence of his boyish proclivities than he had been wont to do hitherto.

It should be remembered also that during his residence at Charterhouse Wesley passed from childhood into youth, a change which, in the case of a boy of marked physical and intellectual vigor, is sure to be attended by more or less of storm and stress. It is the birth of individuality, of the consciousness of selfhood, and is almost sure to bring with it its doubt, its questionings, its tendency to self-assertion and to rebellion against outward authority in all its forms. These manifestations, however, are to be regarded, not so much as signs of depravity, as of the half-blind, half-instinctive effort of the young soul to find itself and its place in this strange universe. Through some such experience young Wesley must have passed; but the conclusion that he ever really lost his faith or was false to those high principles of morality in which he had been trained seems to me to be entirely unwarranted. The only foundation for such a conclusion is Wesley's own rather severe judgment upon this period of his life, written in 1738. But in estimating the reliability of this judgment it is well for

us to remember two things: It was pronounced at the time when Wesley was in the first glow of that flaming enthusiasm which followed his emancipation from his long intellectual and spiritual bondage; and we know that in after years he had occasion to revise quite a number of the severe judgments which he passed at this time upon his former life. Again, Wesley continued for many years, if not to the end of his life, to look upon boys as abbreviated men and to expect of them adult experiences, and to judge them by adult standards. We are not surprised, therefore, that, looking at his childhood from such a view-point, this intensely earnest man of thirty-five, who, after years of doubt and unrest, had just received that marvelous spiritual illumination which was to start him on his triumphant evangelistic career, should have pronounced his adolescent religion rudimentary and unsatisfactory.

But besides all this, we have abundant reason for believing that Wesley, during his residence at the Charterhouse, was an uncommonly grave and exemplary youth. He tells us himself that he faithfully obeyed his father's injunction to run three times around the school garden every day, went regularly to church and communion, and prayed and read his Bible every night and morning. His brother Samuel, who, as I have already related, was at this time usher at Westminster School, wrote to his father more than once praising John's diligence and manliness in the highest terms. Southey says that "for his quietness, regularity, and application he became a favorite with the master, Dr. Walker;" and it is a matter of history

that he finally completed his course with such distinction as to win a scholarship in Christ Church College, Oxford.

III.

Wesley's university career began in June, 1720. In spite of its fame as a seat of learning, the atmosphere of Oxford was at that time by no means favorable either to the intellectual or spiritual development of young men. "Oxford at the beginning of the eighteenth century," says Fitchett, "was perhaps the most prosaic patch in the whole drab-colored English landscape. It had no 'enthusiasms,' not even for athletics! It was the home of insincerity and idleness and of the vices bred of such qualities. Its insincerity, too, was of a specially evil type. It was organized, endowed, made venerable, clothed with authority, and even mistook itself for virtue!" Its ideals were low, its discipline lax, and its religion had degenerated into a kind of High Church formalism, the quality of which is indicated by the fact that it found in the spiritual earnestness of a group of students a fit matter for ridicule.

But little is known of Wesley's life at Oxford during his undergraduate days. There is no evidence that he fell into the loose ways all too common among his fellow-students; and yet it is probable that he was less careful of religious observances at this time than at any other period in his life. He seems to have been in perpetual financial straits; and there is an expression in at least one of his father's letters which intimates that he had not been altogether blameless in the

way he had used his money. One of his contemporaries, a Mr. Badcock, describes him at twenty-one as "the very sensible and acute collegian; a young fellow of the finest classical taste, of the most liberal and manly sentiments." Southey declares that he was a diligent student and that he "was noticed for his attainments, and especially for his skill in logic, by which he frequently put to silence those who contended with him in after years." Others speak of him as a man of polished and genial manners and a brilliant and entertaining conversationalist. Concerning this period of his life Wesley himself has left the following record: "I still said my prayers, both in public and in private, and read, with the Scriptures, several other books of religion, especially comments on the New Testament. Yet I had not all this while so much as a notion of inward holiness; nay, I went on habitually and, for the most part, very contentedly in some or other known sin."

The truth is, Wesley was still in that period of unstable equilibrium that comes between childhood and manhood. The past had not lost its grip upon him, although there may have been a temporary relaxation of that rigid discipline under which he held himself during the most of his life. Doubtless he had his serious moments, moments when he looked wistfully toward the future and dreamed and wondered what it had in store for him. But whatever memories he may have brought out of the past, and however the future may allure and beckon, the healthy youth is apt to find so much that is new and strange and of absorbing interest in the present as to cause him to forget at

times both the one and the other. There is no evidence that Wesley, during his Oxford days, so far forgot as to become either dissolute or flippant; and yet he probably gave freer reign to his natural gayety of temper at this time than had been his custom hitherto. But even so, those years were not lost years. While he laughed and sang with his comrades and basked in the brightness of the morning, the seed sown back in the old Epworth home were germinating and sending their roots deep down into the rich soil of his great young heart. The experience was simply the temporary pause and the unconscious drawing back that came before the battle. In the case of a young man so earnest and noble-minded as Wesley it was bound to be of short duration.

CHAPTER IV.

The Long Quest Begins.

I.

Wesley took his bachelor's degree in 1724. He was now a man, and knew that his playtime was over and that he must face the problem of choosing a life work. There seems to have been a brief period of uncertainty and indecision; but, considering the blood that flowed in his veins and the manner of his bringing up, there could be but little doubt as to how the struggle would end. There was but one vocation which could furnish an adequate opportunity for the exercise of those peculiar qualities of heart and mind of whose possession he must have been vaguely conscious. In the early part of the year 1725 he made known to his father and mother his inclination to enter the service of the Church and sought their counsel in regard to the matter. The correspondence which ensued is intensely interesting and strangely suggestive. It reveals at once the deep religious earnestness of both Wesley and his mother and the serious defects in their view of the Christian life. Nothing is said in their letters about a divine call to the ministry, and even the motive of service receives but scant consideration. The paramount reason in the minds of both mother and son in favor of the latter's taking up the sacred office is that by leading to a "stricter life" and a "more serious pursuit of that noblest of all studies, practical

divinity," it will help to make sure the saving of his own soul.

Of course a man of Wesley's type could not be satisfied with such a conception of his relation to God and his fellows, nor with the theology that lay back of it. We need not be surprised, therefore, that, having decided upon his vocation, he entered at once upon a period of deep unrest. It was really a period of quest, of search after a satisfying conception of God and of God's relation to man and man's relation to God. He had no sooner made up his mind to take orders than, with characteristic diligence and thoroughness, he entered upon the business of preparing himself for his work. He began to study theology, to read devotional literature, and to cultivate those methodical habits in the use of his time which he kept up throughout the remainder of his life.

Two of the books which fell into his hands at this time—namely, *"De Imitatione Christi,"* by Thomas à Kempis, and "The Rules of Holy Living and Dying," by Bishop Taylor—are among the great devotional classics of the ages. Very naturally a young man of Wesley's habitual moral earnestness would be profoundly impressed by the lofty ideals which these immortal productions set forth and the profound note of spirituality which breathes through them. They stirred the great deeps of his soul and awakened within him intense spiritual longings. They made him see that "true religion was seated in the heart," that "God's law extended to all our thoughts, as well as words and actions," and that "it demands absolute simplicity and purity of intention, as well as outward conformity."

They led him to resolve to dedicate all his life to God —all his thoughts and words and actions—and to be more constant in prayer, more watchful against all forms of sin, and more faithful in attendance upon the ordinances of the Church.

Deeply as these works impressed him, however, he did not accept them without question, but subjected them to the same kind of rigid scrutiny which he was accustomed to use on himself. And there were many things in them with which he found fault. He could not, for instance, accept the mysticism, the asceticism, and the fatalism of à Kempis; and he objected to Bishop Taylor's interpretation of humility and to his assertion that it was impossible for one to have any definite assurance that one's sins are forgiven. For light on all these deep matters, and others besides, he wrote to his mother. Her answers are full of wise and wholesome counsel, and show that she was a profound theologian as well as a woman of clear vision and sound judgment. But they reveal also those limitations which were the result of her early Puritan training on the one hand and her later High Church associations on the other. "Faith," she tells him, "is assent to whatever God has revealed to us because he has revealed it." And as to assurance of pardon, she thinks there can be "no such certainty as cannot admit of doubt or scruple till we come to heaven," the very best we can hope for in this life being "a reasonable persuasion" that is the result of self-examination and reflection upon the evidences of our own sincerity. Thus she stumbled at the very places where Wesley most needed help, and, what is still stranger, consider-

ing his intellectual acuteness, he stumbled with her and continued to stumble for thirteen long, weary years. Long afterwards he wrote that all this time he was "utterly ignorant of the nature and condition of justification," and "equally ignorant of the nature of saving faith, apprehending it to mean no more than a firm assent to all the propositions contained in the Old and New Testaments."

Nor were the works of à Kempis and Taylor sources of unmixed blessing to Wesley. The former, notwithstanding Wesley's criticisms of it mentioned above, strengthened his natural tendency toward asceticism and developed a bent toward mysticism which later became a serious menace to his religious life. "Holy Living and Dying," while revealing to him the sweep and altitude of the Christian life as he had never seen them before, failed to lead him into that living fellowship through faith with the divine Christ which he needed to enable him to realize the ideal for which it set him longing. Its author, besides being an extreme High Churchman, was also, according to Coleridge, "half a Socinian in heart." He brought to Wesley the vision of sunlit heights and filled his soul with great ardors and deep yearnings, and then left him to try to work out his salvation by ritualistic observances and the practice of a morbid and self-centered piety.

II.

Wesley was ordained deacon by Bishop Potter September 19, 1725, and on the 17th of March, 1726, was elected Fellow of Lincoln College. The following

summer he spent at Epworth preaching for his father and pursuing his own studies. This visit also gave him an opportunity, which he no doubt earnestly coveted, of talking over with his parents the problems he was trying to solve. Gathered about the family fireside in the evening, they "held high debate on great themes," their talk wandering over almost the entire range of Christian doctrine and practice. It is pleasant to think what a joy this fellowship with the brilliant and accomplished son, for whom they had wrought so faithfully and sacrificed so much, must have been to the gray-haired rector and his wife.

Wesley returned to Oxford in October, and a few days later, although only twenty-three years old, was elected Greek lecturer and moderator of the classes. He received his master's degree February 14, 1727. Having now complete command of his time, he laid out a systematic plan of work to which he rigidly adhered. Monday and Tuesday were devoted to Greek and Latin, Wednesday to Logic and Ethics, Thursday to Hebrew and Arabic, Friday to Metaphysics and Natural Philosophy, Saturday to Oratory and Poetry, and Sunday to Divinity. At intervals he studied French and read a great variety of modern books.

It was at this time that he formed the acquaintance of another author whose works were destined to have a deep and far-reaching influence on him. "Meeting now," he says, "with Mr. Law's 'Christian Perfection' and 'Serious Call,' although I was much offended at many parts of both, yet they convinced me more than ever before of the exceeding height and breadth and depth of the love of God. The light flowed in so

mightily upon my soul that everything appeared in a new view. I cried to God for help, resolved as I had never done before not to prolong the time of obeying him. And by my continued endeavor to keep his whole law, inward and outward, to the utmost of my power, I was persuaded that I should be accepted of him and that I was even then in a state of salvation." In other words, instead of setting him free, the reading of Law plunged him more deeply than ever into legalism.

Many years afterwards Wesley, although still acknowledging his indebtedness to his old teacher and retaining the highest respect and veneration for him, was disposed to blame him sharply for not making clear to him the way of deliverance and peace. And perhaps Law was, in a measure, to blame, but much of the trouble rested with Wesley himself. His mind was so filled with erroneous theological presuppositions that it was difficult for him to grasp those simple, evangelical truths which, at a later period in his life, he was to proclaim so clearly and convincingly.

And besides, Wesley's method was an inversion of the true order. The Moravian preacher who advised him to throw away his philosophizing had discovered the real seat of his difficulty. He was trying to get a theology and then work it out in experience, instead of first getting an experience and then proceeding after the Pauline fashion to develop a theology. Paul began with "the Son of God revealed in him" and worked outwardly. Wesley started with a lot of theological notions, and tried through these to reach a satisfactory religious experience.

It was during the first year of his fellowship at Lincoln that Wesley's bent toward asceticism began to show itself, but it did not for a time carry him very far. A letter from Robert Kirkham, one of his Oxford friends, dated February 2, 1727, informs him that his varied accomplishments have been the pleasing subject of discourse for several hours in the Kirkham home, and then adds: "You have often been in the thoughts of M. B., which I have curiously observed when with her alone by inward smiles and sighs and abrupt expressions concerning *you*." The M. B. here alluded to was the writer's sister, Miss Betty Kirkham, and it is quite evident that Wesley was in love with her as well as she with him. Indeed, matters had gone so far that Robert Kirkham felt at liberty to close the letter from which the above quotation is taken by subscribing himself: "Your most affectionate friend and—brother, I wish I might write." Wesley kept up a correspondence with Miss Kirkham until 1731. Why it was broken off nobody knows, but such evidence as we have favors the conclusion that it was the young lady herself who finally decided the matter. The probability, therefore, seems to be that Wesley, who had by this time become thoroughly attached to Oxford, hesitated about giving up his fellowship, as he must have done if he had married, and that Miss Betty at length grew tired of waiting and gave her hand to another suitor. She married soon after the correspondence between her and Wesley ceased.

In the autumn of 1727 he became his father's curate, and served in this capacity a little more than two years, most of his time being spent at Wroote, a small village

near Epworth, which a few years before had been added to the Epworth living. A more uncongenial place for a scholarly young man fresh from the atmosphere of a great university could scarcely be imagined. It was a wretched hamlet of thatched huts, surrounded by bogs and fens; and its inhabitants, as described by Wesley's bright and witty sister Hetty, were "unpolished wights," as "dull as asses," and "with heads as impervious as stones."

Wesley's work among these people, the very kind he moved so mightily in later life, seems to have been a dreary failure. Nobody was awakened, nobody was converted. He himself explains the reason: "I neither laid the foundation of repentance nor of believing the gospel, taking it for granted that all to whom I preached were believers, and that many of them needed no repentance."

III.

In the autumn of 1729 Wesley received an urgent call from Dr. Morley, rector of Lincoln College, to return to Oxford to preside at the Moderations. Public debate at this time formed a large part of the university training, and it was the duty of the moderator to preside at these discussions. This position Wesley filled from November, 1729, until his departure for Georgia in October, 1735. He placed a very high estimate upon the educational value of these exercises. "For several years," he says, "I was moderator in the disputations which were held six times a week at Lincoln College, Oxford. I could not avoid acquiring thereby some degree of expertness in arguing, es-

pecially in discovering and pointing out well-covered and plausible fallacies. I have since found abundant reason to praise God for giving me this honest art. By this, when men have hedged me in by what they call demonstrations, I have been many times able to dash them in pieces in spite of all its covers, to touch the very point where the fallacy lay, and it flew open in a moment."

In addition to his work as moderator, he delivered daily lectures to a number of students, keeping up his course during the entire year without intermission.

The most important part of Wesley's life during these six years, however, lay entirely outside of his regular routine of college duties. Just after his election to the Lincoln fellowship his Brother Charles came up from Westminster and entered Christ Church. Charles was at first disposed to be somewhat indifferent in regard to religion, and when upbraided by his brother for his want of seriousness replied that he ought not to be expected to turn saint all at once. During John's residence at Epworth, however, a change came over Charles. He began to cultivate systematic habits of devotion, and by and by gathered about him a small group of like-minded young men, who assembled at stated times for prayer and religious conversation and were mutually pledged to help one another in leading stricter lives than those commonly adopted among their fellow-students. It was not long until the little coterie began to attract attention and become a target for the ridicule of the worldly-minded Oxonians. Among the various epithets applied to them was one which was either invented or rediscovered by a witty student of

Christ Church. Observing the orderly fashion of their lives, he dubbed them *Methodists,* a name destined to acquire large historic significance in the years to come. Several members of the club became prominent later in various lines of life, but only two of them besides John Wesley became permanently identified with the Methodist movement—namely, his brother Charles and George Whitefield, the former as its great singer, the latter as its most fervid and spectacular popular orator.

IV.

On his return to Oxford in 1729 John Wesley became a member of the Holy Club and at once assumed the position of leadership for which his genius and force of character so eminently fitted him. Under his guidance the little brotherhood, while increasing in numbers, grew more serious in temper and subjected itself to a still more exacting régime of discipline. The position of its members, both in regard to doctrine and practice, was that of the most extreme High Churchism. They attended frequently upon the communion, fasted twice a week, drew up an elaborate system of rules for regulating the employment of their time, and subjected themselves to a scheme of microscopic examination, which, Southey says, "might fitly be appended to the spiritual exercises of Ignatius Loyola." To this monastic system of self-discipline, however, they added the most diligent practice of works of charity and benevolence. They visited the sick and the inmates of workhouse and prison, gave relief to the needy, taught

the children of the neglected poor, and labored to turn the godless young men of the university to a more serious way of living. It was during this time that John Wesley adopted the habit of retiring every evening at ten and rising in the morning at four, and of "abridging himself," as he puts it, "of all superfluities and many that are called the necessaries of life," in order that he might give to the needy. Finding that he could maintain himself on twenty-eight pounds a year, he allowed himself just that much for his personal expenditure and devoted all the remainder to charity. Indeed, his whole life was brought under a most rigid and exacting system of rules.

The strain of such a system of self-discipline at length proved too much for him, and he was for a time in danger of a complete physical collapse. Twice before during his Oxford career he had suffered from hemorrhages from the lungs. Now his old trouble returned in a still more alarming form, and he was for some time under medical treatment. About the same time another member of the group, William Morgan, died, and the Club was accused of having brought about his death by its austerities. As a consequence of all this the ridicule and persecution to which its members had all along been subjected became yet more pronounced and violent, so that Wesley felt compelled to assume the defensive. He wrote out a full account of the aims and practices of the Club, and propounded a series of questions intended to put to silence the gainsaying of its adversaries.

All this time Wesley was trying to work out a satisfactory theology, as well as to come into a satis-

factory religious experience; but in neither direction were his efforts successful. At one time, he tells us, he was in danger of drifting into mysticism. In 1733 he preached a sermon on "The Circumcision of the Heart," which is still one of the fifty-three forming the doctrinal standards of Methodism, and which he says contains all that he subsequently taught "concerning salvation from all sin and loving God with an undivided heart." And yet, even in this sermon as originally published, we find the same defective view of faith to which I have already had occasion to call attention. It is still thought of as assent to a system of doctrines rather than as a sure confidence in the pardoning mercy of Christ wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit. In another sermon, "The Trouble and Rest of Good Men," preached in 1735, he harks back to the old idea that the Christian's only hope of deliverance from "the whole body of sin" is in death.

Meanwhile his religious experience remained utterly lacking in the element of joy. Fear haunted him like a shadow, and his soul was constantly filled with doubt and unrest. "Mirth," he writes to his brother Samuel, "I grant, is very fit for you. But does it follow that it is fit for me? You are very glad because you have passed from death to life. Well! But let *him* be afraid who knows not whether he is to live or die. Whether this be my condition or no, who can tell better than myself?"

Another incident of the closing period of Wesley's life at Oxford throws light upon his state of mind at that time. In the beginning of 1734 his father, realizing his increasing feebleness and believing that

his end drew near, appealed to his son to become his successor at Epworth. His concern in the matter grew partly out of his anxiety to have his aged wife and his unmarried daughters provided for when he should be called away. John, after urging sundry excuses and objections, at length flatly declined to accede to his father's request. The sum of his reasons for so doing is that he is not willing to give up the congenial atmosphere at Oxford in order to work among the poor of a remote country parish. "The question," he writes to his father, "is not whether I could do more good to others here or there, but whether I could do more good to myself; seeing wherever I can be most holy myself, there I can most promote holiness in others." And then he proceeds to recount the various advantages which Oxford has for self-improvement. He had not yet learned that the way to save one's life is by losing it. It is not strange that such a self-centered piety brought no peace to his soul.

CHAPTER V.

Seeking in Strange Ways.

I.

Wesley's father died April 25, 1735. Hard-headed and impetuous, he was still true in the inmost heart of him, and, like all sincerely good men, he grew gentler as age advanced; and it is pleasant to record that his stormy career closed peacefully and triumphantly. His sons, John and Charles, were with him during his last days. So clear was his faith that he seemed at times to fall into an almost prophetic mood. Again and again he laid his hands upon the head of his youngest son and said: "Be steady. The Christian faith will surely revive in this kingdom. You shall see it, though I shall not." To John he would say: "The inward witness, my son, the inward witness! That is the strongest proof of Christianity." But the son was not ready to receive this dying testimony of his venerable father. "I did not," he said when repeating these words at a later day, "at the time understand them."

Mr. Wesley left no provision for the support of his family. Charles had not yet taken his degree from Oxford, and the income from John's fellowship was but little more than sufficient for his own maintenance. Consequently the burden of caring for Mrs. Wesley and her unmarried daughters fell upon Samuel, then settled at Tiverton. The father had finished before his death the commentary on the book of Job upon which

he had been working for years, and John went to London to present a copy to the queen.

Just at this time General Oglethorpe, founder of the colony in Georgia, was in London in the interest of his cherished enterprise, and was on the lookout for a chaplain. Dr. Burton, of Corpus Christi College, who was one of the trustees of the colony, recommended Wesley for the position, and a formal tender of it was made by Oglethorpe. Wesley was in a mood to consider the offer. Oxford had at last lost its spell upon him. Perhaps he had discovered that its cloistered seclusion and its select fellowship had not been so favorable for developing a vital Christian experience as he had formerly supposed. After talking over the matter with various friends, he went to Epworth to get the advice of his mother. Her answer was such as would naturally be expected by one familiar with her lofty and heroic temper. "Had I twenty sons," she said to him, "I should rejoice that they were all so employed, though I never saw them more."

On September 18, 1735, Wesley agreed to go. Many of his friends thought it a foolish adventure, and in order to fortify himself he wrote a letter dated October 10, which shows how far he still was from having attained the true Christian view of life. "My chief motive," he says, "is the hope of saving my own soul. I hope to learn the true sense of the gospel of Christ by preaching it to the heathen." His mind is still preoccupied with thoughts of self. He has yet to learn the secret of Jesus.

Wesley set sail for his new field of labor October 13, 1735. With him were three other members of the Holy

Club—his brother Charles (who went as General Oglethorpe's secretary), Benjamin Ingham, and Charles Delamotte. With the voyage begins Wesley's Journal, now generally regarded by scholars as "one of the most interesting social documents of the eighteenth century."

Freed from the conventional constraints of his university life, Wesley adopted an almost monkish austerity. He and his associates drew up a plan of daily engagements which took up every moment of their time from four o'clock in the morning till nine in the evening. He gave up the use of meat and confined himself to a diet of vegetables and biscuit, and even of this scanty fare he partook of only two meals a day. Later his menu was reduced to a diet of bread alone. Having had occasion one night to lie on the floor because a storm had wet his bed, he "slept sound till morning;" so he decided that going to bed was a superfluous indulgence which he should no longer allow himself. "He acted on the assumption," says Fitchett, "that his soul was a besieged fortress and each physical sense was an avenue standing wide open to his foes. An appetite starved into submission or otherwise suppressed was a traitor hanged."

Among Wesley's fellow-passengers were twenty-six Moravian exiles on their way to Georgia to join a company of their brethren already settled there. Their simple, serious, dignified manners at once attracted his attention, and he began to learn German in order that he might be able to converse with them. During the voyage an incident occurred which still further increased his interest in them. A storm broke upon the

sea just as they were beginning a religious service. The rest of the ship's company were thrown into the utmost terror and confusion, and Wesley had to confess that he himself was not without "a sin of fear." But all the while the Germans calmly sang on. The tempest over, he asked one of them: "Were you not afraid?" "I thank God, no," the man answered. "But," continued Wesley, "your women and children, were they not afraid?" "Our women and children are not afraid to die," responded the questioned one mildly. And Wesley went away to ponder the significance of the strange incident.

II.

On the fifth of February, 1736, Oglethorpe's ship anchored in the Savannah River. Ingham and Charles Wesley were sent on to Frederica, while John and Delamotte were left at Savannah. Wesley had no sooner landed than he sought out August Spangenberg, the head of the little Moravian community, in order to ask his advice as to how to proceed with the work upon which he was about to enter. Spangenberg proceeded, after the usual straightforward manner of his sect, to put him through an examination. "My brother," he said, "I must first ask you two or three questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?" Wesley was confused and knew not how to answer. Observing his confusion, Spangenberg asked: "Do you know Jesus Christ?" "I know," Wesley answered, "that he is the Saviour of the world." "True," was the reply; "but do you know that he has saved you?" Wesley answered evasively: "I hope he

has died to save me." "But do you know yourself?" urged Spangenberg. Driven thus into a corner, Wesley finally gave an affirmative answer; but in recording the incident he says: "I fear they were vain words."

As soon as he had got his bearings he entered upon his work with characteristic vigor and thoroughness. Savannah at that time was a village of 500 inhabitants, with an outlying population of 200 more. He had a parish, therefore, of 700 souls. These he not only taught on Sunday, but visited from house to house during the week, devoting to the latter work the hours between noon and 3 P.M., when the people could not work because of the heat. He organized a school of thirty or forty children, which was taught by Delamotte, and conducted catechetical classes on Saturdays and Sundays. Besides those in English, he conducted services in German, French, Spanish, and Italian, having learned the Italian language that he might be able to teach a little band of Vaudois, and Spanish for the sake of his "Jewish parishioners, some of whom," he remarks, "seem nearer the mind that was in Christ than many who call him Lord."

III.

At first the people were deeply impressed by his preaching. But because of the resentment awakened by his extreme High Church views and practices, his influence soon began to wane. Dr. Burton, says Southey, had advised him "to consider his parishioners as babes in their progress, and therefore to feed them with milk." But instead of acting upon this wise counsel, "he drenched them with the physic of intolerant dis-

cipline." He held both early morning and forenoon services daily. He celebrated the Lord's Supper every Sunday, but excluded from it all those who had not been episcopally baptized. He insisted on immersing infants; and when one of his parishioners declined to have her child baptized after this mode, he refused to baptize it at all. He rebaptized the children of dissenters, and would not admit to the communion the pious pastor of the Salzbergers because his baptism had not been strictly canonical. Years afterwards he wrote: "Can High Church bigotry go farther than this? And how well since have I been beaten with mine own staff."

Charles Wesley managed to raise a tempest within a few days after his arrival at Frederica, and was in a perpetual turmoil until his return to England in July. Upon receiving information of his brother's troubles, Wesley hastened to Frederica, hoping that he might be able to allay the storm. A glance at his Journal will show how completely he failed. "Observing much coldness in Mr. ——'s behavior," he writes, "I asked him the reason of it. He answered: 'I like nothing you do. All your sermons are satires upon particular persons; therefore I will never hear you more; and the people are all of my mind, for we won't hear ourselves abused. Besides, they say, they are Protestants; but as for you, they cannot tell what religion you are of. And then your private behavior. All the quarrels that have been here since you came have been along of you. Indeed, there is neither man or woman in the town who minds a word you say.'"

Wesley made other visits to the island after his

brother's return to England, but they seem to have been quite as fruitless as the first. In his Journal, under date of January 26, 1737, he says: "After having beaten the air in this unhappy place for twenty days, I took my leave of Frederica. It was not any apprehension of my own danger, though my life had been threatened many times, but an utter despair of doing good there, which made me content with the thought of seeing it no more." As a confession of utter failure and of abject surrender this record would be difficult to surpass. Meanwhile matters were going from bad to worse at Savannah. A month after his first arrival there Wesley became acquainted with Miss Sophia Hopkey, niece and ward of Mr. Canston, the chief magistrate of the town. She was a young woman of intelligence and prepossessing appearance; and Wesley, beneath whose monkish exterior was hidden a deep vein of sentiment, yielded quite readily to her charms. It is not probable that there was ever a formal engagement between them, but that there was a mutual affection which for a time promised to end in matrimony is certain. At length, however, the warnings of his fellow-worker, Delamotte, awakened doubt in Wesley's mind as to whether the young lady's outward show of piety might not be a mere trick to win his affection, and this at once raised the question as to whether or not he should marry her. He decided to submit its determination to the Moravian elders. After solemnly considering the matter, they called Wesley in to learn his fate. "Will you abide by our decision?" they asked him. After some hesitation, he replied that he would. "Then we advise you to proceed no further in the matter," said the bishop.

Meanwhile Miss Hopkey, having "learned that her lover was submitting the direction of his affections to a court of venerable Moravian elders," made an end of the whole business by giving her hand to another suitor. The elders gave their decision on March 4, and on March 12 she was married to a Mr. Williamson. Wesley's Journal shows that his affections were deeply involved, and that the providence which "took from him the desire of his eyes at a stroke" was one of the hardest he had ever had to bear. "I was pierced through," he says, "as if with a sword."

Still the unhappy affair might have ended at this but for Wesley's own indiscretions. A few months after Mrs. Williamson's marriage he felt called upon to reprove her on account of "some things in her conduct which he thought reprehensible," and was quite surprised to find that she resented his conduct as impertinent meddling in affairs which did not concern him. Then the storm broke. Her husband brought suit against Wesley for five thousand pounds damages. He was arrested but allowed to go free on pledging himself to appear before the next term of the court. Meanwhile a grand jury of forty-four persons took the case into consideration. Twelve charges were preferred against Wesley, and thirty-two jurymen pronounced ten of these charges sustained. When called upon to answer, he took the ground that nine of the ten charges were about ecclesiastical matters over which the court had no jurisdiction. Upon the other, which accused him of "speaking and writing to Mrs. Williamson without her husband's consent," he demanded an immediate hearing. But his enemies were evidently in no haste

about the matter. They desired not only to drive Wesley from the colony, but to give his departure the appearance of a flight from justice. The military chaplain at Frederica was put in charge of the services at Savannah, and Wesley's work was practically taken from him. Still the weeks dragged on without his being able to secure trial. Tired out with this bootless waiting, he at length posted a paper in the public square announcing his purpose of immediately setting out for England. He was at once notified by the magistrates that he must not leave until he had answered the allegations against him. He replied that he had appeared at six or seven courts successively in order to answer them, but was not suffered to do so. After consulting together, they decided that he might go, provided he would give security for his appearance before the court when called for. Upon his positively declining to accede to this demand, they published an order requiring all officers and sentinels to prevent his going and forbidding any one to assist him to do so.

His work at Savannah was now clearly at an end. He had come out with great plans for teaching and Christianizing the simple, open-minded savages, but had as yet "neither found nor heard of any Indians who had the least desire of being instructed," and there was certainly no longer an opening for him to labor among the colonists. So he resolved to take his departure at once. It was Friday, December 2, 1737. "As soon as evening prayers were over," he says, "about eight o'clock, the tide then serving, I shook off the dust of my feet and left Georgia, after having preached the gospel not as I ought, but as I was able,

one year and nine months." He made his way to Charleston, from whence he sailed for England December 22.

Winchester thinks "it is exaggeration to say that Wesley's mission in Georgia was a failure." "Such self-denying labors," he declares, "could not fail of effect." But this, to put the matter in the mildest possible way, is an exceedingly charitable judgment. Doubtless he was helpful to quite a number of persons, but it is questionable as to whether all the good he did was not more than counterbalanced by the evil resulting from the strife of which he became the unwitting occasion.

CHAPTER VI.

Reaching the Goal.

I.

Wesley's Journal shows that he left Georgia in a state of profound depression. He writes bitter things against himself. "It is now two years and almost four months," he says, "since I left my native country to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity; but what have I learned myself in the meantime? Why, what I least suspected: that I who went to America to convert others was never myself converted." Elsewhere he declares that he had learned that he was "alienated from the life of God, a child of wrath, an heir of hell." In the calm retrospect of later life he modified these severe judgments, adding after the former declaration, "I had even then the faith of a servant, though not that of a son," and after the latter, "I think not." Nevertheless, these records show with what a humiliating sense of failure he turned his back upon the field of labor upon which he had entered two years before with such high hopes.

This bitter experience, however, was not in vain. As he himself puts it, it humbled him, proved him, and showed him what was in his heart. Especially did it reveal to him the futility of that vain desire which had pursued him so long—of being in solitude in order to be a Christian. Particularly significant is this last confession. It shows that he was at last beginning to discern in a dim way that an ascetic and self-centered religion is not the religion of Christ.

II.

But Wesley was not a man to yield to permanent discouragement or to acknowledge permanent defeat. That wonderful will power which enabled him in later years in the face of so many grave difficulties to pursue with calm courage and unwavering determination the task to which he felt that he was providentially called could not be crushed by temporary failure and disappointment. No one was ever more candid than he in dealing with himself. But having with resolute courage acknowledged his mistakes, with all their unhappy consequences, he at once began to ask: "How can I make amends? how turn defeat into victory?" Nor did he believe in waiting in idleness for an answer. He had not at this time clearly formulated the doctrine that we are to wait for the faith that is victory in doing good, but he had already begun to act upon it. "Whatever was clouded in his spiritual sky," remarks Fitchett, "the point of duty always shone with luminous clearness."

Landing at Deal on the morning of February 1, he at once proceeded to read prayers and preach in the house in which he lodged. In the afternoon of the same day he conducted religious services at Feversham. Two days later he was in London, ready to make his report to the trustees of the Georgia colony.

The favorable impression which he had received of the Moravians in his association with them at Savannah naturally inclined him to turn to them in his hour of deep spiritual perplexity. He records that on Tuesday, February 7, he met at the house of Mr. Weinantz, a Dutch merchant, Peter Böhler and two of his com-

panions, and that from this time he did not lose an opportunity of conversing with them while he was in London. Böhler was at that time only twenty-five years old. He had but recently graduated from the University of Jena and been ordained by Count Zinzendorf as a Moravian missionary, and he was on his way to Carolina when Wesley met him. He was a young man of exalted character and profound religious earnestness, and Wesley at once recognized in him a kindred spirit. He listened eagerly to Böhler's explanation of the way of salvation, and to "the account he gave of the fruits of faith, the love, holiness, and happiness that he affirmed to attend it." By this simple testimony his stubborn prejudice was at length overcome. He began to feel vaguely that here at last was the secret that had so long eluded him. "On Sunday, the 5th of March," he records, "I was clearly convinced of unbelief." At once it occurred to him that he must cease preaching until he attained the peace of faith. "By no means," answered Böhler when the proposal was submitted to him. "Preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith." Coleridge misses the point entirely when he maintains that this amounts to "tell a lie long and often enough, and you will be sure to end by believing it." Wesley's reason was already thoroughly convinced. The only trouble was that his experience was not up with his information. Böhler's advice simply amounts to this: "Act upon your conviction, and the corresponding experience will inevitably follow." Wesley took the advice and began the very next day to preach what

he strangely terms the "new doctrine; though," he adds, "my soul started back from the work."

But there was still another difficulty in his mind which must be cleared away. He had now no objection to what Böhler taught in regard to the nature of faith; neither could he deny the happiness and holiness which Böhler described as fruits of this living faith. But when it came to the doctrine of instantaneous conversion he stumbled. A careful study of the New Testament, however, at last overcame his doubt; and the conclusion to which he was thus forced was still further confirmed by the testimony of living witnesses.

III.

It only remained now for Wesley to bring his experience into conformity with his convictions. Charles Wesley, who was not so deeply smitten with the "malady of thought" as his brother, had already found the deliverance which he sought; but the latter, although never for a moment permitting his zeal in practical work to relax, lingered still in a state of spiritual unrest. At last, however, his day of deliverance came. It was Wednesday, May 24, 1738. He had attended service at St. Paul's in the afternoon, where he had been deeply impressed by the anthem, "Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord." "In the evening," he says, "I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, *I felt my heart strangely warmed.* I felt I did trust in Christ

alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins—even *mine*—and saved *me* from the law of sin and death."

A very simple and unimpassioned recital this, and yet Lecky declares that that meeting in Aldersgate "forms an epoch in English history."

Wesley's announcement of his new experience, accompanied by the declaration that up to this time he had not in a real and vital sense been a Christian at all, at once became an occasion of surprise and scandal among his friends. He was acucsed of fanaticism, and some even went so far as to express grave doubt as to his sanity. His brother Samuel was particularly distressed. In a letter to a mutual friend he says, "What Jack means by his not being a Christian till last month, I understand not;" and he closes with the prayer that God may "stop the progress of this lunacy."

Such an attitude on the part of those who had been acquainted with Wesley's manner of life from his youth is by no means surprising. For who had been more constant in prayer, more diligent in the search for truth, more zealous in doing good, and more willing to count earthly ease and honor but refuse that he "might win Christ and be found in him" than this zealous and austere young Churchman? In what light, then, are we to regard his past life, and how are we to interpret this strange new experience?

The question as to whether or not he was a Christian during those earnest Oxford and Georgia years turns entirely on what we mean by a Christian. In later life Wesley maintained that a man may have such a measure of faith as makes him no longer a child of

wrath, and yet fall far short of that triumphant faith in which it is the privilege of the child of God to rejoice; and it seems evident that, reversing the severe judgments pronounced against himself at a time of temporary depression, he came to believe that even during his years of quest and doubt he was in this lower sense a Christian. As he himself puts it, he had the faith of a servant but not that of a son.

In the deepest sense, however, he was not a Christian. His life was self-centered. In all his laborious activities in behalf of others his thoughts were primarily upon himself. He refused to leave Oxford to become his father's successor at Epworth because he judged that the former place afforded more favorable conditions for self-improvement than any other. His chief purpose in going to America was that he might save his own soul. And so in everything he does self-interest is the leading motive. That this is not the Christian attitude, no one at the present day will, I am sure, be disposed to question. Selfishness is no less selfishness because it assumes the guise of religion. What Wesley needed was to get hold of a power that could lift him out of himself and completely change his life motive, and this he found at last through the kindly help of his Moravian teachers. Hitherto, he tells us, he had regarded faith as assent to all the propositions contained in the Old and New Testaments; and it is quite clear that he thought of God as a kind of absentee Ruler, governing the world by a system of arbitrary laws and operating upon the lives of men through the sacraments of the Church. The two great secrets which he learned from the Moravians were that

faith is fundamentally not a matter of belief but a personal relation—the absolute trust of the individual soul in a personal Saviour and the whole-hearted committal of the life to him—and that God is not a Being afar off, but a living presence in the heart of the believer, cleansing him from sin, imparting new life, and giving peace and victory over temptation. By reason of this discovery his thoughts, hitherto self-centered, became Christ-centered. His eyes, which had all along been turned inward, were turned outward and upward. Gazing on the crucified and risen One, his soul was at last carried captive; and he surrendered with adoring love, becoming, like Paul, the willing bondslave of his Lord. It was thus that he was lifted out of the realm of doubt into the realm of peace, out of the old life of vain self-striving into a new life of love and self-giving.

IV.

The triumph which came to Wesley on that eventful night in Aldersgate was not so complete, however, as is sometimes assumed. There was still a season of alternating cloud and sunshine, and his soul was often "in heaviness because of manifold temptations." At length he made up his mind to see if he could not find relief by a few weeks of fellowship with the Moravians in their community in Germany. "My weak mind," he writes in his Journal, "could not bear to be thus sawn asunder; and I hoped conversing with these holy men who were themselves living witnesses of the full power of faith . . . would be a means of so establishing my soul that I might 'go on from faith to faith and from strength to strength.'" He sailed June 13, and

was absent till the middle of September. With much that he heard and saw at Herrnhut he was greatly pleased. He had long talks with various members of the community, and was thoroughly convinced of the reality of their experiences; and so were the convictions which he had been recently led to adopt confirmed.

His association with them, however, did not remove all his difficulties, nor was it without its unwholesome influence upon him. He was misled for a time by their contention that no one could be justified without having the witness of the Spirit, and by their tendency to identify this witness with a certain type of emotional experience. Several months after his return from Germany he made this record in his Journal: "My friends affirm I am mad because I said I was not a Christian a year ago. Indeed, what I might have been I know not, had I been faithful to the grace then given, when expecting nothing less, I received such a sense of the forgiveness of my sins, as till then I never knew. But that I am not a Christian at this day I as assuredly know as that Jesus is the Christ." From what follows it is quite evident that he bases this utterly irrational conclusion upon the fact that he does not feel as he is sure one ought to feel who has the witness of the Spirit. Thus by an exaggerated emphasis upon the importance of feeling he was temporarily thrown back into an old habit from which his experience in Aldersgate had for a time delivered him. His gaze, which for the time had been turned outward, upward, Christward, was once more turned inward. He began again to keep an anxious finger upon his spiritual

pulse; and as one's moods are necessarily more or less fitful and uncertain, he continued for a season to alternate between hope and doubt.

All this, however, does not in the least discredit that experience which he continued throughout his life to regard as a true spiritual rebirth. This experience had shifted his whole life to a higher level and given him a new revelation of his spiritual capacity, and it was only a matter of time when he would throw off the errors by which he was temporarily confused and claim as his permanent possession the life of freedom of which he had caught a momentary glimpse. It was only a short time till he learned to put less stress upon the purely emotional aspect of religion. In his old age he wrote: "When, fifty years ago, my brother Charles and I, in the simplicity of our hearts, told the people that unless they knew their sins forgiven they were under the wrath and curse of God, I wonder they did not stone us. Methodists know better now."

As always, so in Wesley's case the new vision of Christ brought with it a new thought of humanity. He was soon carried by the power of the new spirit awakened within him into a life of self-forgetting service for others; and in this service the old habit of morbid introspection, together with the doctrinal errors which had helped to produce it, dropped away from him by a natural and almost unconscious process. The attitude which he had attained for an hour on May 24, 1738, became a fixed and permanent habit. It is a significant fact that after his entrance upon his work in Bristol, in April, 1739, he rarely makes mention in his Journal of his own experience. He writes a good deal about the

experiences of others; but for himself he tells us where he went, to whom he preached, what he did, what he read; but he seldom says anything about how he felt. His faith had at last become a settled confidence, undisturbed by shifting emotions.

And just in proportion as his faith became fixed and his spiritual triumph complete did the main outlines of his message become clear and definite. All his life long he was a truth seeker and a learner. "I sincerely desire," he writes in his preface to his sermons, "to be better informed. I say to God and men: What I know not, teach thou me."

One of the questions he propounds in the minutes of the Conference of 1744 is: "Need we be fearful of doing this—the overturning of our first principles?" And his answer is: "If they be false, the sooner they are overturned the better. Let us pray for a willingness to receive new light, to know every doctrine whether it be of God."

It is not surprising that such a man should have continued throughout his entire life to change his opinions. And yet, so far as the essential substance of his message is concerned, it remained practically the same from the day he preached his first open-air sermon in April, 1739, until that October day in 1790 when he preached his last. The reason is simple. It was not made up of speculations and theorizings, but of those fundamental and eternal moral and spiritual verities which, however we may state them, in their real essence remain unchanged from age to age, and which are the truths by which men must live if, in the highest sense, they live at all.

CHAPTER VII.

Finding His Place.

I.

With the exception of two visits to Oxford, Wesley spent the first six months after his return from Germany in and about London. He seems to have had no definite plans as to his future. He ministered to the convicts in the London prisons and workhouses. He preached in the churches as long as he was permitted to do so, and when their doors were closed against him he taught in private houses and in the meeting places of various religious societies. For it should be kept in mind that the idea of organizing small groups of Christians into societies for mutual help and coöperation did not originate with Wesley. Such societies had existed for more than half a century not only in London, but also in various other cities of the United Kingdom, when he entered upon his evangelistic mission. Most of these were strictly Church societies, but there was one in the establishment of which Wesley himself had taken part that was of a somewhat different kind. This was the Fetter Lane Society, organized May 1, 1738. A majority of its members were Moravians, and it was so thoroughly permeated by the Moravian spirit that it was to all intents and purposes a Moravian brotherhood, although it was not at first officially recognized as such. Wesley was never a Moravian, as has been charged, but he was profoundly grateful to the Moravians for

the great service they had rendered him, and for at least two years after his conversion lived in close affiliation with them. Fetter Lane was the first center of the Methodist movement in London.

II.

During the year 1737, while Wesley was still in America, George Whitefield, already mentioned as a member of the Holy Club at Oxford, although a young man just out of college, suddenly startled the ecclesiastical circles of England by the power and eloquence of his preaching. He burst upon the scene like another John the Baptist, and wherever he went great multitudes flocked to hear him. His fame traveled even across the Atlantic, and caused Wesley to write him a letter urging him to extend his evangelistic labors to the New World. After due deliberation, Whitefield decided to obey the summons; and when Wesley landed at Deal on his return to England, he learned that his old friend was just sailing for Georgia. In the autumn of the following year, however, Whitefield returned home to collect funds for an orphanage which he had established at Savannah. Upon his arrival he proceeded at once to London, where he proposed to begin his work. But he soon discovered that, although the people were as eager as ever to hear him, the churches were now closed against him. The movement with which his name, together with that of the Wesleys, had become associated was falling more and more under suspicion, and the ecclesiastical authorities were setting themselves against it. Finding his way blocked in the metropolis, Whitefield

set out for Bristol, where vast multitudes had attended upon his ministry eighteen months before; but it at once became apparent that here too there was a tacit agreement that he should be silenced.

It has often happened, as in the Apostolic Church, that persecution has become a providential means of compelling the messengers of the cross to break over conventional barriers and of sending them forth to bear the good tidings into fields which they might not otherwise have dreamed of entering. So it turned out in this instance. Four miles northwest of Bristol and adjacent to the coal mines which supplied the city with fuel was a tract of country called Kingswood. As its name suggests, it had formerly belonged to the royal preserves, but it had been first neglected and then gradually appropriated by neighboring landowners. At this time it was covered with the squalid huts of miners. From the time of their settlement in the region these people had lived apart, despised and neglected. Provided with neither schools nor churches, they had fallen into such a state of ignorance and bestiality that they had become at once "the terror of the law and the despair of philanthropy." Whitefield's sympathy had been aroused for these unfortunate people on the occasion of his first visit to Bristol, and now, finding himself excluded from the churches, he made up his mind to carry to them the message of life, even though he must trespass the laws of ecclesiastical propriety in order to do so. Accordingly, on the 7th day of February, 1739, he preached his first outdoor sermon on Kingswood Common to about two hundred begrimed and brawling hearers. This

revolutionary step, as Whitefield had doubtless anticipated, became at once an occasion of great scandal in Church circles, but it stirred the heart of the common people. Beginning with a little company of one or two hundred, the great revivalist was soon preaching to audiences of fifteen, twenty, or even thirty thousand. And such eager listeners he had never preached to before. He tells in his Journal how he was sometimes almost overwhelmed as he looked down upon the vast multitude of upturned faces and saw the white streaks made by the fast-flowing tears down their grimy cheeks.

III.

But Whitefield had to return to America, and so he wrote to Wesley, urging him to come at once to Bristol in order to carry on the work so auspiciously begun. The latter, however, was still so much under the influence of his ecclesiastical prejudices that he was uncertain as to whether or not he ought to obey the summons. One of the absurd superstitions in which he had been confirmed by his association with the Moravians was that of supposing that important matters might be decided by lot. The Bible was opened at random, and the first passage upon which the eye fell was construed as a divine direction as to what to do.

Thus did Wesley undertake to settle the question as to whether or not he should go to Bristol. The answers were for a time enigmatical, all the texts found seeming to threaten some dire disaster. The final outcome, however, was that it was decided that he should

obey what seemed a clear call of Providence. He reached Bristol March 31, and two days later Whitefield took his departure.

Wesley's reluctance about going to Bristol was probably the result largely of his doubt as to whether or not he ought to lend countenance to Whitefield's breach of ecclesiastical order. "I could scarce reconcile myself at first," he says, "to this strange way of preaching in the fields, of which he set me an example on Sunday; having been all my life, till very lately, so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church."

But it was not his way to argue long against the logic of facts, and here were certain plain, indisputable facts staring him in the face. That he should ultimately yield was, from the first, inevitable. As it turned out, it took him only a short while to surrender his deep-seated prejudices and come to an honest decision; and, his decision reached, he proceeded with his usual promptness to act upon it. Under date of April 2 he makes this record in his Journal: "At four in the afternoon I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining the city to about three thousand people." This record marks an epoch in his life and in the great movement in which he was the providential leader. The barriers are now broken down and he is definitely committed to his divinely appointed mission. Writing to a friend who had begged him to desist from his unseemly violations of

ecclesiastical order, he concludes with these memorable words: "Suffer me now to tell you my principles in this matter. *I look upon all the world as my parish, thus far, I mean; that in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to declare unto all that are willing to hear the tidings of salvation. This is the work to which I know God has called me, and sure I am that his blessing attends.*"

IV.

With the exception of four short visits to London, a tour into Wales, and another to Exeter, Wesley spent the entire time between April 1, 1739, and the close of the year in Bristol. There are considerable gaps in his Journal for this period, but it is estimated that he preached over five hundred times.

I have already spoken of certain religious societies within the Church, which at this time had been in existence for more than fifty years. In Bristol, and perhaps in other places, these societies became the centers about which Methodism first began to organize itself. Two of the Bristol societies which opened their doors to Wesley were those in Nicholas and Baldwin Streets. After he began preaching to them, their membership grew so rapidly that it soon became necessary to provide larger quarters for their meetings. Accordingly, on the 9th of May, 1739, a plot of ground was purchased near the Horse Fair, and three days later *the corner stone of the first Methodist meetinghouse was laid.*

The title to the property was first vested in trustees, who were expected to provide funds for com-

pleting the enterprise. Later, however, it was deemed best to procure a new deed, making Wesley himself the holder of the chapel; and, as the trustees had utterly failed in the matter of securing funds, he was compelled to assume the entire financial responsibility, although, as he says, he "neither had any money nor any human prospect or probability of procuring it."

The day before Wesley's arrival at Bristol, Whitefield dined with the colliers at Kingswood, and they subscribed twenty pounds for the erection of a schoolhouse. Four days later he laid the corner stone of the proposed building and immediately took his departure for London, leaving with Wesley the task of finishing the work thus inaugurated. The latter, therefore, at the very beginning of his work in Bristol, found himself loaded down with financial burdens which he had in no wise anticipated. But, nothing daunted, he set resolutely to work to discharge these unexpected responsibilities, and ere long succeeded in raising enough money to bring both enterprises to completion. This first Kingswood school, I may note in passing, was founded for the benefit of the children of the miners, and was not the school which later became so famous in the history of English Methodism. John Cennick, one of Methodism's earliest lay preachers, was its first principal.

V.

Mention has already been made of Wesley's four visits to London between April 1, 1739, and the close of the year. The first of these visits, made for the

purpose of settling certain difficulties that had arisen in the Fetter Lane Society, came in June. This visit has its chief significance for us because of the fact that at this time Wesley first took his place as a field preacher in London. Whitefield had already set the example, as he had previously done at Kingswood. On the day after Wesley's arrival, Whitefield invited him to attend a service which he was to hold at Blackheath. Upon arriving at the spot they found twelve or fourteen thousand people assembled, and Whitefield, to his surprise, informed Wesley that he was to preach to them, which he finally consented to do, though with great reluctance. On the following Sunday he preached to vast congregations at Upper Moorfields and on Kennington Common. A week later Charles Wesley, who had been driven from his curacy at Irlington, ventured to follow his brother's example. "The three great companions," as Fitchett calls them, were now fairly enlisted in this new and revolutionary work.

Another important incident connected with this London visit was Wesley's meeting with his mother, whom he had not seen for a year. Some one had written her a distorted version of a paper of his in which he gave an account of the work of grace in his own heart, and as a consequence she was greatly disturbed, fearing that he had erred from the faith. In order to remove her apprehension he read her the account just as he had first written it. It met with her hearty approval, and she blessed God who had brought her son to so just a way of thinking. It is pleasant to record that from this time on she was in thorough

sympathy with his work, and rendered him no small service by her wise and godly counsel. Her last years were spent at the Foundry, rejoicing in the spread of the great revival.

In connection with another visit to London in November, Wesley makes mention of the fact that he preached at eight o'clock to five or six thousand, and at five in the evening to seven or eight thousand, "in the place which had become the king's foundry for cannon." The building here referred to was purchased a few days later and became the headquarters of Methodism until City Road Chapel was built, in 1778. When fitted up it contained a large chapel, a class room, a schoolroom, a book room, and apartments for Wesley and his helpers.

The need for such a Methodist center soon became apparent. The quietistic and antinomian tendencies of the Moravians began to manifest themselves soon after Wesley's departure for Bristol. Charles Wesley was in favor of separating from them, but John, perhaps impelled by his sense of gratitude for the help he had received from them, insisted for a time on maintaining a fellowship that he had at first found so delightful. As time went on, however, it became increasingly evident that the sane and clear-headed reformer could not keep up his connection with a band of narrow and extravagant fanatics, however sincere and earnest they might be or however profound his sense of obligation to them. The step which he had vainly sought to avert was finally taken on Sunday evening, July 20, 1740, when he and a small company of his followers formally withdrew from a meeting in Fetter Lane.

Three days later the seceding members, numbering about twenty-five men and fifty women, met for the first time at the Foundry instead of at Fetter Lane; "and so," according to Tyerman, "the Methodist Society was founded on July 23, 1740." Wesley places the rise of the Society at "the latter end of the year 1739," when a number of earnest inquirers came to him, desiring that he would spend some time with them in prayer and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come. But as to the formal organization separate and apart from the Moravians, Tyerman is doubtless correct.

The sifting process, however, was not yet complete. Many of Wesley's other fellow-workers besides the Moravians had adopted the Calvinistic theology, among them George Whitefield and John Cennick, already mentioned as the first principal of the Kingswood school. Wesley was earnestly desirous of preserving amicable relations with them, it being one of his favorite contentions that doctrinal differences, unless in regard to the very fundamentals of the faith, ought not to be a barrier to mutual fellowship and good will among believers or to cordial and harmonious coöperation in Christian service. But the Calvinism which he had to face was militantly and aggressively intolerant. It looked upon the Arminianism of Wesley as a deadly and intolerable heresy, and demanded as a condition of continued coöperation that he refrain from preaching it. Of course this was a condition to which no honest man could agree. Wesley was willing to "think and let think," but he would not agree to "let think but not think." Some

time during the year 1740 he published his sermon on "Free Grace." Whitefield and his fellow-Calvinists were deeply offended, and uttered their protests in language not at all calculated to make for peace and harmony. The Society at the Foundry was rent by discord. Many of Wesley's most trusted and honored assistants dropped away from him, and even between him and Whitefield there developed a sad estrangement. Later they became reconciled and lived in mutual love and confidence until Whitefield was called to his reward. But the breach in Methodism was never healed. The Calvinistic Methodists, under the leadership of Lady Huntingdon, soon became organized into a separate body which continues until this day.

It was unfortunate that the great revival, almost at its beginning, had to pass through the throes of a violent theological controversy; but in view of the conditions by which Wesley was confronted, it is not easy to see how it could have been avoided. The relatively small success of the Moravians and the Calvinistic Methodists may serve to give us some idea of the loss that might have resulted to evangelical Christianity if Wesley, for the sake of peace, had consented to adopt the policy of silence and compromise demanded by Whitefield. Peace is indeed desirable, but it is possible to purchase it at too great a cost. The Master knew that the peace which he came to establish on earth must come after long ages of conflict with sin and error. That was why he said: "I came not to send peace, but a sword." The theology of the great awakening and of the revived and renovated Church which was to follow was to be, not Calvinistic, but Arminian;

and it was well for the times that were to come after that, however unwelcome the task may have been, when the emergency arose Wesley met it prudently and courageously. The publication of his sermon on "Free Grace" and his consequent break with Whitefield finally and positively committed the branch of Methodism of which Wesley was to be the leader to evangelical Arminianism and determined the direction which the main current of the new religious movement was to take. By the close of 1740 the great reformer had become sure of his bearings and was definitely launched upon his providential mission. He had long been under the conviction that he was destined for some important and far-reaching work for the Church and the world. In a letter written from Savannah to his brother Samuel, asking for his opinions concerning certain teachings of the mystics which he summarizes, he says with marked emphasis: "Give me them as particularly, as fully, and as strongly as your time will permit. They may be of consequence not only to this province, but to nations of Christians yet unborn." As to what his work was to be and how he was to go about it, he was for a long time uncertain. But this uncertainty is now passed. At last his eyes are wide open, and he hears distinctly and unmistakably the divine Voice saying: "This is the way; walk ye in it."

CHAPTER VIII.

The Field.

Before proceeding further in the study of Wesley's work, it may be well for us to pause for a hasty glance at the field in which he was called to labor. A wholesale indictment of any age is sure to be wrong. When Elijah came to the pessimistic conclusion that he was the only man left in Israel who was loyal to Jehovah, he was informed that, as a matter of fact, even at that dark period there were yet seven thousand who had not bowed unto Baal. There were good men in England in the time of George II. both in the pulpit and out of it; but that the country as a whole was in sad need of reform, both in morals and religion, all students of history are agreed.

I.

That part of society which was pleased to regard itself as the best was unspeakably coarse and vulgar. The king himself was a notorious profligate, and Queen Caroline seemed to see no impropriety in making her husband's vices the subject of drawing-room jests. "Drunkenness and foul talk," says John Richard Green, "were thought no discredit to Walpole. A later Prime Minister, the Duke of Grafton, was in the habit of appearing with his mistress at the play. Purity and fidelity to the marriage vows were sneered out of fashion; and Lord Chesterfield, in his letters to his son, instructs him in the art of seduction as a part of polite education." Drunkenness and boisterous profanity and vulgarity were the commonplace accom-

paniments of high social functions. Edward Wortley Montagu, speaking as a first-hand observer, says of the England of this period that it "was the ape of France; and, as almost any crime which Juvenal enumerates or Suetonius describes or man imagines was practiced with open impunity by the Gauls, so it came to pass that in our own country also it was thought unfashionable to be decent and good breeding to be impudent."

II.

At the other end of the social scale were the ignorant and bestialized poor. The rapid increase of population, and especially the growth of the great commercial and industrial centers which had come about as a result of the development of trade and manufacturing, had been met by no effort for the religious and educational improvement of the wage-earning classes. No new parishes had been created, no new churches built, and no schools opened. In cities like London and Newcastle the masses were sunk into such a condition of degradation and wretchedness as is almost inconceivable. Lecky regards the sudden growth of the appetite for gin which took possession of the English people during the first half of the eighteenth century as the most important fact in the history of the times—"incomparably more so than any event in the purely political or military annals of the country." "In the streets of London," says Green, "ginshops at one time invited every passer-by to get drunk for a penny or dead drunk for twopence." In 1750 the physicians of London reported fourteen thou-

sand cases of illness, most of them hopeless, due to the excessive use of alcoholic stimulants; and the city at that time contained but little more than six hundred thousand inhabitants.

Of course there was, under such circumstances, an alarming prevalence of crime and lawlessness. The streets of the cities and the highways approaching them were infested with bandits, and it was no uncommon thing for public vehicles to be held up and their passengers plundered. To quote Green once more:

> The criminal class gathered boldness and numbers in the face of ruthless laws which only testified to the terror of society—laws which made it a capital crime to cut down a cherry tree and which strung up twenty young thieves of a morning in front of Newgate.

In the country conditions were but little better. "The rural peasants, who were fast being reduced to pauperism by the abuse of the poor laws, were left without much moral or religious training of any sort." Hannah More, writing at a much later time, declares that she saw but one Bible in the parish of Cheddar, "and that was used to prop a flowerpot." Wesley found no more difficult class to deal with than the country poor. "In the little journeys which I have lately taken," he writes, "I have thought much on the huge encomiums which have been for many ages bestowed on country life. But, after all, what a flat contradiction to the universal experience! Our eyes and ears may convince us that there is not a less happy body of men in all England than the country

farmers. In general their life is supremely dull, and it is usually unhappy too."

III.

"For this lawless mass of humanity, in city and country," says Winchester, "that swayed about the foundations of society, decent, order-loving folk had only hatred and threats of punishment. Philanthropy was hopeless of them. It was noticed that those charitable and reforming societies which had been formed in the reign of Anne had accomplished nothing for them. The Church seemed powerless to take religion to them; it was certain they would never come to the Church."

Indeed, the saddest aspect of all this sad situation was that the Church was not seriously concerned about them; for the Church itself was dead and inert. Green asserts that much of the social degradation of the time was due to the apathy and sloth of the priesthood, which he declares to have been "the idlest and the most lifeless in the world." In his "Lectures on the Four Georges," Thackeray draws some striking pictures of the clergy of this period. Here is one of them:

It was a parson who came and wept over this grave, with Walmoden, one of the dead king's many mistresses, sitting on it, and claimed heaven for the poor old man slumbering below. Here was one who had neither dignity, learning, morals, nor wit, who had tainted a great society by a bad example, and who, in youth, manhood, old age was gross, low, and sensual; and Mr. Porteus, afterwards my Lord Bishop Porteus, says the earth was not good enough for him, and that his only place was heaven! Bravo, Mr. Porteus! The

divine who wept these tears over George the Second's memory wore George the Third's lawn.

And this servile sycophant is but a type of a class which was by no means inconsiderable. No wonder the people were both immoral and irreligious, when such men held high place in the Church, and no wonder skepticism was so widely prevalent that even so acute an observer as Montesquieu concluded that there was "no such thing as religion in England." The old religion, Lecky tells us, seemed everywhere loosening around the minds of men, and it had often no real influence even upon its defenders. This is in accord with the dark indictment that Bishop Butler prefixes to his Analogy:

> It has somehow come to be taken for granted that Christianity is not so much a subject of inquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious. Men treat it as if in the present age this were an agreed point amongst all people of discernment, and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject for mirth and ridicule.

But even among those who still cherished some semblance of religious conviction there was an utter lack of deep religious earnestness. After the two great waves of religious passion that had swept over England, the one culminating in the horrors of the Civil War and the other in the bitterness succeeding the Restoration, there had come a period of reaction and compromise. The people had come to look with suspicion upon everything that had the least appearance of zeal. To speak of a man as an enthusiast was to brand him as more dangerous than an ordinary criminal. "A sound divine," says Fitchett, "was much

more anxious to purge himself of the suspicion of enthusiasm than of the scandal of heresy." Bishop Butler, who complained that the deplorable distinction of his age was an avowed scorn of religion, forbade the Wesleys and Whitefield to preach in his diocese, though within a few miles of his cathedral were thousands of degraded and hopeless miners, who were almost as absolute barbarians as the South Sea Islanders. In a conversation with Wesley in the spring of 1739 he spoke of the claim to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Spirit as a thing to be held in the greatest abhorrence, and this opinion was shared by the best men of the time. The emotional side of human life, which the psychologists of the present day regard as the richest and the most important part of it, the preachers of the eighteenth century looked upon with mingled dread and contempt.

They regarded reason as the sole test of truth and the altogether sufficient guide of the soul. They had the most implicit confidence in the worth of the syllogism, and supposed that the more unimpassioned the logical process, the surer it was to lead to a right conclusion. They were so anxious to prove Christianity rational that they almost stripped it of its supernatural elements. Lecky affirms that, "beyond a belief in the doctrine of the Trinity and a general acknowledgment of the veracity of the gospel narratives, the divines of that day taught little which might not have been taught by the disciples of Socrates or the followers of Confucius." They had adopted the deistic conception of an absentee God, who ruled the world through secondary agencies, a kind of "consti-

tutional monarch," to quote the language of Leslie Stephen, "who had signed a constitutional compact and retired from the active government affairs;" and religion consisted in a decorous observance of the terms of the compact. To speak of God as a living presence in the lives of men was to be guilty of the grossest fanaticism and superstition.

The prophetic element had been banished entirely from the preaching of the time. Leslie Stephen describes one of the most distinguished pulpit lights as "a mere washed-out dealer in second-hand commonplaces, who gives the impression that the real man has vanished and left nothing but a wig and gown." Measured platitudes were doled out Sunday after Sunday to empty pews; while the people, in utter indifference to the pious dronings of their official teachers, were absorbed in their vices and pleasures. There was no power in such preaching to touch the deeper springs of action. It was utterly lacking in that note of authority and tone of earnestness which are needed to arrest the attention and awaken the consciences of men. It made no converts. It changed no lives. In fact, it did not seriously concern itself about doing so. Wesley constantly justified his apparent breaches of ecclesiastical order in preaching in forbidden territory by the declaration that he was doing what the regular clergy showed not the least disposition to do. It was simply a matter of saving the despised and neglected multitudes in this irregular way, or else allowing them to remain in their ignorance and sin.

Thus it had come to pass, as in the sad days which Amos foretold in the life of Israel, when the land was

smitten by the most dire famine—"not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord." The religious leaders were utterly destitute of vision, and as a consequence the people were left to perish.

Nor was there any help for this melancholy situation in the dissenting bodies of the time. The great bulk of the independent clergy had fallen into a kind of Unitarian rationalism. The more conservative element of them were extreme Calvinists, who sought to honor God by proclaiming in its baldest and most revolting form the doctrine of election and reprobation, and who looked upon Arminianism as a more dangerous and pestilential heresy than Unitarianism.

Such were the conditions in England when Wesley made his great discovery in 1738. The discovery set him free from his long bondage and set his heart aglow with love and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. It opened his eyes also to the sad plight of millions of his despised and disinherited brothers, and filled him with Christlike longing to help them. It was in obedience to this call from without and this impulse from within that he began his work.

CHAPTER IX.

The Messenger.

The revival is now beginning to take definite shape as a profound and far-reaching religious movement, and Wesley has become its leader not by human appointment nor in accordance with any prearranged human plan, not even by his own deliberate choice, but simply because he sees so clearly the need of the hour and hears so imperatively the divine call to help in meeting the need that he cannot evade the responsibility.

It will be impossible to follow him from this time onward through all the details of his multiplied and varied activities. For full fifty years he was one of the most tireless workers the world has ever known. The story of these years as outlined in his Journal furnishes a record of toil and achievement that has but few parallels in human history. The most we can do in a brief study like this is to glance at those aspects of his work which seem best suited to give a reasonably adequate conception of its nature and scope and of the personality of the worker who expresses himself through it.

I.

As preaching was the chief agency employed in bringing about the great awakening, it is fitting that, in a study of Wesley's qualifications for leadership in it, we begin by considering him as a preacher. There

is a prevalent notion that at this particular point Wesley was inferior to Whitefield, Edwards, and other eminent religious leaders both in popularity and effectiveness; but this conclusion is not supported by facts. Wherever he preached after his epochal experience of May 24, 1738, vast crowds of people thronged to hear him. We read of congregations of ten, twenty, and even thirty thousand. And the influence of his preaching upon these mixed multitudes was almost indescribable. Standing in the open fields, often drenched by rain and chilled by wintry winds, they would listen with rapt attention to discourses which sometimes stretched out over full two hours; and as they listened tears would run down their grimy cheeks, and in many instances men and women by the score would fall prostrate as if smitten by some strange supernatural power and cry aloud for mercy.

Nor were these striking effects for the most part mere spasms of excitement which soon passed away, leaving no permanent impress upon the lives of those who were the subjects of them. That there were some instances in which this was the case is doubtless true; but, judging from results, we are bound to conclude that in a large proportion of those who came under the influence of Wesley's preaching a profound and permanent moral transformation was wrought. When his methods were criticised, he was always able to appeal with perfect confidence to the facts. "I will show you," he says to the objectors, "him that was a lion and is now a lamb, him that was a drunkard and is now exemplarily sober, the whoremonger that was who now abhors the very garments spotted by the

flesh." Perhaps Dr. Rigg is not far wrong when he declares that "no one else has ever produced habitually and as a rule such effects as ordinarily attended John Wesley's earlier ministry and often attended his ministry in later life."

II.

And yet, considering Wesley's antecedents, training, and general mental and temperamental characteristics, we are struck by the fact that he was not the kind of man who might have been expected to become "a popular religious orator or an awakening preacher of electrical and overwhelming power over all classes, but especially over the working masses of the people." On both the paternal and maternal sides he was descended from long lines of cultivated ancestors. He spent many years of his early manhood in one of the historic centers of English learning. He was a man of refined and scholarly tastes, a lover of books and cultivated society. The elect circles of Oxford were much more congenial to him than the coarse and unwashed multitudes with whom he spent so much of his life. The cloistered seclusion of the great university and the opportunities it afforded for high fellowship and the pursuit of learning appealed to him in the strongest possible fashion. He was an extreme High Churchman, with a bias toward mysticism and asceticism. He loved the formal worship and the dignified and stately ceremonial of the Church of England, not only before his conversion, but all his life long. "His most congenial element to the last," says Dr. Rigg, "would have been found rather

in the cathedral solemnity than in the zest of open-air addresses to an uninstructed multitude."

His style as a speaker was simple and direct. He spoke with contempt of what he termed "the amorous style of praying and the luscious style of preaching." He had neither the dramatic power of Whitefield nor the fervid imagination of Jonathan Edwards. He told but few stories and made but spare use of rhetoric. "His attitude in the pulpit," writes Hampson, who knew him intimately, "was graceful and easy, his action calm and natural yet pleasing and expressive; his voice not loud, but clear and manly; his style neat, perspicuous, and admirably adapted to the capacity of his hearers." Henry Moore, one of Wesley's close friends, says that when he first heard him preach he was astonished that one who spoke with such simplicity should have made so much noise in the world.

"Nor is it true," remarks Winchester, "as is sometimes alleged by historians of that century, that the preaching of Wesley and his followers owed its effect to the crude but vivid presentation, before ignorant and vicious men, of the tortures of future punishment. Of Wesley, at least, nothing could be more false. It is clear from his Journal that he rarely, if ever, appealed to terror." And in support of this statement he proceeds to give a list of Wesley's favorite texts, showing that it was his custom to emphasize the promises and provisions of the gospel rather than the terrors of the law.

What, then, was the secret of his marvelous mastery over the minds and hearts of men?

III.

Doubtless it is to be attributed in part to the influence of his unique personality. God does indeed use the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty. Much of his saving work is wrought through the agency of men and women of only ordinary natural ability. But for the great, the exceptional, tasks he must have men of exceptional endowment—a Moses, an Elijah, a Paul, a Martin Luther, a John Knox, a John Wesley. For that Wesley belongs to this elect company of the immortals no careful student of his life can question. He was not a man of imposing physical presence, like Henry Ward Beecher or Phillips Brooks. He lacked a little of being five feet six inches in height, and weighed just one hundred and twenty-two pounds. And yet there was a strange, indefinable something about him that inspired even his intimate friends with a kind of awe. It seems quite certain that the predominant aspect of gentleness shown in the pictures of his old age gives a false impression of his appearance. The portrait by Williams, painted when he was in the full vigor of his manhood, brings out much more clearly the rugged strength of one born to be a leader among his fellows. Richard Watson Gilder, in his fine commemorative ode, speaks of the soul that "flamed o'er England" as shining "in those clear, piercing, piteous eyes." This description corresponds with those given by Wesley's contemporaries, and is corroborated by accounts of the effect produced by his presence upon all sorts and conditions of men.

Again and again do we read of his calming an infuriated mob by looking its leaders in the face and speaking a few quiet words to them. One evening when he was preaching at Long Lane a great multitude gathered on purpose to make a disturbance. They were led by a woman "well known in those parts as neither fearing God nor regarding man." The moment she broke out he turned full upon her, and, looking into her eyes, began to tell her of the love of the Lord for her soul. Then he knelt and prayed that God would confirm the word of his grace. The woman was overwhelmed with shame and became silent. From her he turned to the rest, "who melted away like water, and were as men that had no strength."

On another occasion, after preaching at Kennington, he returned to find an innumerable company gathered in front of his home, "who opened all their throats the moment they saw him." Sending his friends inside, he walked boldly into the midst of the frenzied crowd and "proclaimed the name of the Lord, gracious and merciful." They stood staring at one another in amazement. Then telling them that they could not flee from the face of this great God, he proposed that they all join together in crying to him for mercy. To this they readily agreed, and the uproar ended in a prayer meeting. Scenes like these, which were of frequent occurrence in the life of Wesley, especially during his early ministry, show that there was something marvelously impressive, perhaps at times almost awe-inspiring, in his personality; and that this personal equation must be taken into

account in trying to discover the secret of his power as a preacher need not be affirmed.

Notice how strikingly this is illustrated in the following account by John Nelson, who later became one of the most faithful of the early Methodist preachers, of the effect produced upon him by the first sermon he heard Wesley preach:

> As soon as he got upon the stand he stroked back his hair and turned his face toward where I stood, and, I thought, fixed his eyes upon me. His countenance fixed such an awful dread, before I heard him speak, that it made my heart beat like the pendulum of a clock, and when he did speak I thought his whole discourse was aimed at me. . . . I thought he spoke to no one but me, and I durst not look up, for I imagined all the people were looking at me.

There must have been something truly remarkable in the "countenance" that could fix upon this brave Yorkshireman "such an awful dread that it made his heart beat like the pendulum of a clock."

IV.

And yet there was a time when this man of regal soul, whom Professor Davenport describes as "the most terribly impressive preacher that England ever knew," preached for month after month without making any apparent impression upon his hearers. It is probable that but few men of intelligence, earnestness, diligence, and uprightness ever made more dismal failures than Wesley made at Wroote. While making due allowance, therefore, for the influence of his unique and forceful personality, we cannot agree with the author just quoted that this was the chief element

of his power as a preacher. It was his personality plus something else that was added after his return from the barren mission to Georgia that made his subsequent ministry so marvelously effective.

That something else was, first of all, the quickening of his soul by the touch of the Divine Spirit. It was the experience of Pentecost repeated, the enduement of power from on high, power that is the resultant of the expression of those qualities that are awakened and developed in the soul by the quickening of the Holy Ghost.

The Wesley of the old Oxford and Georgia days was a self-centered Pharisee, mainly concerned about saving his own soul. The Wesley whose message melted the hearts of the rude colliers of Kingswood and Newcastle was so full of tender concern for others that but little room was left for thoughts of self. When his aged father besought him to leave the congenial atmosphere of Oxford to become his successor at Epworth, he positively declined, giving as his reason for doing so that he felt that conditions at Oxford were much more favorable for the working out of his own salvation than they were likely to be among the ignorant peasants of the little Lincolnshire village. At the former place he had the daily companionship of cultured and pious friends and the invaluable blessings of retirement, of freedom from care, of communicating weekly, and of attending public prayers twice a day. It is not easy for us to realize that this self-centered, ascetic churchman, whose cloistered piety must be "wrapped in cotton wool and fed with a spoon and allowed to breathe a medicated atmosphere"

to keep it from dying, is the same man who spent fifty years of arduous and self-forgetting toil among the poorest and the lowliest of his countrymen. And, indeed, in a profound and real sense he was not the same, for he had become a new creature in Christ Jesus, old things having passed away and all things having become new. And this new Wesley was so full of compassion for the neglected and degraded among his countrymen that he might almost have declared with Paul that he could wish himself anathema from Christ for their sake. "Ever since I came to Newcastle the first time," he writes in his Journal, "my spirit has been moved within me at the crowds of poor wretches who were every Sunday, in the afternoon, sauntering to and fro on the Sandhill. I resolved, if possible, to find them a better employ." Again he says: "Being Good Friday, I had a great desire to visit a little village called Placey, about ten miles north of Newcastle. It is inhabited by colliers only, and such as had always been in the first rank for savage ignorance and wickedness of every kind. . . . I felt great compassion for these poor creatures from the first time I heard of them, and the more because all men seemed to despair of them. Between seven and eight I set out with John Healy, my guide. The north wind, being unusually high, drove the sleet in our face, which froze as it fell and cased us over presently. When we came to Placey, we could hardly stand. As soon as we were a little recovered I went into the square and declared Him who 'was bruised for our sins and wounded for our iniquities.'"

The very texts that he used in preaching to the de-

spised and friendless multitudes show how his "heart was enlarged toward them." "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely." "We love him because he first loved us." "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor." With such tender appeals did he call upon the outcast and perishing to come unto his Lord and theirs and find rest unto their souls. Is it any wonder that his message touched the hearts of those who had been accustomed all their lives long to expect from their superiors nothing but indifference or contempt? Is it any wonder that, as in the case of the Master whose Spirit he exemplified, "the common people heard him gladly?"

Another secret of his power over the people, which lay very close to that which we have discovered in his great love for them, was his thorough understanding of them. Because he cared for them and lived close to them he learned to know them—to know not only their shortcomings and limitations, but also their secret sorrows and their unuttered longings. A physician, in order to treat a patient successfully, must understand both him and his disease. Because Wesley understood the neglected masses of his countrymen he was able to minister wisely to their spiritual needs. Looking down beneath the rough and often repulsive exterior, he saw the good in them as well as the evil; and while condemning and rebuking the evil, he did not forget to appeal also to the good. And he knew

just how to make his appeal effective, to speak to them in language which they could comprehend, and which bore directly upon the real experiences of their every-day lives.

Another secret of the new power that came into Wesley's preaching after his conversion was his changed attitude toward the truth he proclaimed. In the voice of the old Wesley there was always the half-audible undertone of doubt and fear. The voice of the new Wesley was vibrant with hope and holy confidence. The message of the old Wesley, earnest though it was, was but little more than a dead, mechanical enunciation of second-hand dogmas; the message of the new Wesley welled up out of the great deeps of a divinely quickened and illuminated soul. It had in it, therefore, all the freshness and charm and power of life itself—the life of the soul from which it sprang and the life of the Spirit by whom it was inspired. In it there was no note of apology or uncertainty. It was the voice of the prophet, surcharged with a very passion of holy earnestness and throbbing with mighty conviction, bidding the dry bones live; and as the prophet prophesied, there was a noise and a shaking, and out of the very desolation of this moral desert there arose an exceeding great army.

CHAPTER X.

The Message.

It has been quite the fashion, even among Methodists, to affirm that the Wesleyan revival was a distinctively spiritual and not at all a doctrinal movement, and Wesley himself is quoted in support of this view. Attention is called to the fact that he always maintained that he preached nothing but the plain old doctrines of the Church of England, and that he again and again declared that a Methodist was not one who had a certain set of opinions, but one who lived a certain kind of life. There is a sense in which both these statements are true, and yet both are likely to prove misleading without some further explanation.

I.

The Wesleyan revival *was,* first of all and above all, a spiritual movement. Wesley was not primarily a theologian, bent on developing and defending a system of doctrine, but a prophet bent on awakening the slumbering consciences of his countrymen; and the real prophet is always interested in truth, not in its speculative, but in its practical aspects, not as furnishing a system of affirmations for the satisfaction of the intellect, but as supplying principles for the interpretation of life and the regulation of conduct. This was precisely Wesley's attitude. He did not identify faith with belief nor classify men according to the opinions they held rather than according to the lives they lived. "A string of opinions," he de-

clares, "is no more Christian faith than a string of beads is Christian holiness." He was the first of modern ecclesiastical leaders to maintain that men ought to be able to live together in Christian fellowship and to coöperate in Christian service on the simple basis of faith in Jesus Christ and loyalty to him. His Journal shows that to the very end of his life he cherished the hope of building up a great religious communion on this broad foundation. In his Journal under date of August 26, 1789, he says: "I met the society (at Redruth) and explained at large the rise and nature of Methodism, and still aver I have never read or heard of, either in ancient or modern history, any other Church which builds on so broad a foundation as the Methodists do; which requires of its members no conformity either in opinions or modes of worship, but barely this one thing: to fear God and work righteousness." "Is man a believer in Jesus Christ," he writes elsewhere, "and is his life suitable to his profession? are not only the main but the sole inquiries I make in order to his admission into our Society." No man was ever more nobly tolerant toward those who differed from him in opinion. His rule was that in all matters of opinion we are to "think and let think."

It is not to be inferred from all this, however, that Wesley was one of those who believed that it makes no difference what a man thinks or that he held his own convictions lightly. On the contrary, no one ever believed more deeply or preached what he believed with more passionate earnestness; and it would be absurd to maintain that the substance of his message

had no part in bringing about the great spiritual awakening in which he came to be the providential leader. On the contrary, it seems to me beyond question that the largeness and permanence of the results of that awakening are in no small degree attributable to the revolution in religious thinking that went along with it.

II.

It is true, as he himself affirms, that Wesley taught nothing that had not been taught by previous interpreters of the Holy Scriptures and that was not in some sense set forth in the great historic creeds of Christendom. But he revived some fundamentally important doctrines which had long been practically neglected, while in the case of others he so changed the emphasis as to cause them to be seen in an entirely new perspective and to produce an altogether new impression; and so, without any purpose of setting forth a new theology, he became largely instrumental in determining the direction in which the evangelical thought of the future was to travel.

The center about which all a man's religious beliefs organize themselves is his conception of God; and it was at this point that eighteenth century theology was fundamentally defective. It was largely Calvinistic, and almost wholly deistic. It conceived of God as a kind of omnipotent Cæsar enthroned in some far-off corner of his universe and governing it mainly through secondary agencies. It was generally assumed by religious teachers that at some remote period in the past he had made occasional visits to the earth and held converse with a few favored individuals; but

to affirm that he still touched human lives and spoke to human hearts in a direct way was regarded as the rankest superstition.

Now a theology that puts an infinite distance between God and his creatures cannot have power over the lives of men. It empties the great words of the Bible of their meaning, and reduces religion to a mere matter of formal and lifeless ecclesiastical etiquette. It "inspires no martyrs, creates no saints, sends out no missionaries, writes no hymns, and has little use for prayer." In fact, men who hold such a creed cannot in the deepest sense be said to be religious at all; for "the religious man," as Winchester aptly puts it, "is filled with a sense of the presence of God and of the force of spiritual laws *here and now.*" He is sure of an immediate relation between himself and the Supreme Being. But most of the ecclesiastical leaders of the eighteenth century regarded the assertion of any such sense of the divine presence as savoring of the most dangerous enthusiasm. Their message had in it, therefore, no tone of authority or element of vitality, and of course it was impossible that it should arouse the conscience or touch the deeper springs of action.

There was a small minority of the preachers of Wesley's day who represented a much more fervent type of piety; but unfortunately most of those belonging to this class had adopted the theological positions of the most ultra Calvinism. They put such tremendous emphasis upon the divine sovereignty as to thrust completely into the background the more benign aspects of the divine nature. They preached a fatalism

as cold and severe as that of Mohammed. In order to exalt God they degraded man by making him the mere puppet of the divine will without any semblance of freedom or right to question the eternal decree which, for the glory of the infinitely exalted Ruler of the universe, had consigned a large proportion of hapless mortals to an eternal hell.

Such a theology, however fervently proclaimed, could hardly be expected to appeal with any great degree of effectiveness to the sodden and hopeless multitudes whom the contempt and neglect of those above them had long taught to regard themselves as the outcasts of creation.

III.

Into this exhausted and mephitic atmosphere Wesley turned the pure, life-giving breezes that descend upon the earth from higher spiritual altitudes. He began his mission by bringing back into the life of the world and into the lives of men the living God whom theology had banished. He believed thoroughly in the written word as the rule both of our faith and practice; but he would not have it that the God who spoke to men of old speaks to them no more, that the spirit that fired the hearts of the prophets kindles no holy ardors in the hearts of men to-day, that the Christ who lived in Paul has become a mere tradition for the modern world. He would have been ready to adopt the language of Tennyson:

Speak to him, thou, for he hears, and spirit with spirit can meet;
Closer is he than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

Or the language of Whittier:

No fable old, nor mythic lore,
Nor dream of bards and seers,
No dead fact stranded on the shore
Of the oblivious years;

But warm, sweet, tender, even yet
A present help is he;
And faith has still its Olivet,
And love its Galilee.

The healing of his seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain;
We touch him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again.

Thus, while he had a clear-cut creed and knew that every rational man must have, he did not look upon religion as primarily a matter of belief, but as a personal relation, a vital union through faith between God and the individual soul. There was a vein of mysticism in Wesley, as there is in all men who are profoundly religious. He defines justification legalistically; but the new life of the believer he explains mystically, just as Paul does. Faith he regards as a kind of spiritual sense whereby the spiritual man discerns God and the things of God. The immediate consequence of this vision of the divine glory is a glad response of love and confidence on the part of him to whom it is revealed. He quotes the classic saying that if virtue could be seen she would excite wonderful love, and adds: "How much more, if you see him who is the original fountain, the great archetype of all virtue, will that sight raise in you the love that is wonderful!" And this is just the vision that is vouchsafed to the eye of faith; and the soul, carried captive

by this vision of the divine glory, is transformed into the divine likeness. Religion, therefore, is not a mere matter of rules and ritual ceremonies, but a vital mystical union with Christ, and hence a life within of which the possessor is immediately conscious. One of Wesley's favorite texts was: "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God." He did not, except for a short while immediately after his conversion, insist on the clear witness of the Spirit as an invariable accompaniment of the new birth, nor did he identify this witness with any special type of emotional experience. But he never ceased to insist that it is the blessed privilege of every child of God to know that his sins are forgiven and that he is accepted into the beloved.

Furthermore, he shifted the emphasis from the absolute sovereignty to the fatherly love of God. He would not save the divine dignity at the expense of the divine benignity. He maintained that every erring child of earth is encompassed by the Father's love and embraced in the sweep of his infinite pity, and that against no one, either in pagan or Christian land, is the gateway of life eternal arbitrarily closed. The gospel he proclaimed as a message of redeeming love, of divine propitiation through the blood of the everlasting covenant for the sins of the whole world; and the salvation thus purchased for all as offered to all upon terms so simple that the humblest, the poorest, and the most ignorant may meet them. No one was ever more unsparing than Wesley in laying bare the sins and probing the consciences of men; but he did this by holding up over against their hardness and dis-

obedience the love and compassion of the heavenly Father, rather than the awful majesty and holiness of the infinite Ruler. In his message there was a mingling of stern rebuke and tender appeal that reminds us of the Prophet of Nazareth. "O ye gross, vile, scandalous sinners," he would say, "hear ye the word of the Lord: 'Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he should return and live.' Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away thy sins! See the only-begotten Son of the Father, 'full of grace and truth!' He loveth thee. He gave himself for thee. Now his bowels of compassion yearn over thee! O believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved! 'Go in peace, sin no more!'"

And while he brought back to the orphaned multitudes the divine Father swallowed up in the old theology in the infinite Sovereign and offered to every lost soul a divine Redeemer, he also restored human life to that place of dignity and importance which belongs to it in the Holy Scriptures. He reënthroned the human will, declaring that it lies with every man to make the choice which is to decide his own destiny. He exalted the grace of God in man's salvation; and yet he dared to maintain that each man has somewhat to do with his own salvation. True, we are saved through faith, and faith is the gift of God; but it is a gift bestowed upon all who seek it in welldoing. Nothing can be more false, he affirms, than that a man is to do nothing in order to justification. Whoever desires to find favor with God should cease from

evil and learn to do well; and having been justified, each individual must still coöperate with God in working out his own salvation. "We cannot allow," he says, "that man can only resist and in no wise work together with God; and that God is so the whole worker of our salvation as to exclude man's working at all." No faith is worthy the name that does not express itself in active obedience to the will of God and in whole-hearted service for our fellows.

Indeed, true faith, the faith that brings the soul into living fellowship with God, must inevitably so express itself, just as a good tree cannot but bring forth good fruit. Thus, while the religion which he proclaimed was profoundly spiritual, it was also profoundly ethical. The old societies for the reformation of manners formed some half a century before Wesley began his work, says Lecky, had found themselves utterly helpless in the presence of bold and increasing wickedness. It is easy to see why they had failed. You cannot reform a man's manners without first changing his life. Wesley's societies also were in the deepest sense societies for the reformation of manners; but he began on the inside and worked outward, instead of beginning on the outside and depending on legal and repressive measures. His method was not mechanical, but vital, and therefore it succeeded. Green, in his "History of the English People," thus describes the moral and social results of it: "In the nation at large appeared a new moral enthusiasm, which, rigid and pedantic as it often seemed, was still healthy in its social tone, and whose power was seen in the disappearance of the profligacy which had dis-

graced the upper classes, and the foulness which had infested literature ever since the Restoration. A new philanthropy reformed our prisons, infused clemency and wisdom into our penal laws, abolished the slave trade, and gave the first impulse to popular education." Another historian declares that the Wesleyan revival saved England from the fate of those nations which have become the victims of their vices. "There is a current platitude just now," remarks Fitchett, "that the next revival must be ethical. If so, it will be a return to Wesley; for the revival which bears his name was ethical in the most intense and practical fashion. Religion, as Wesley defined it and enforced it, consisted of godly tempers and godly conduct." But Wesley sought to bring about, and did actually bring about, these ethical results, not by means of High Church ritualism or pharisaic legalism, but by bringing each individual into direct and vital fellowship with God.

IV.

The ideal which Wesley held up before every beliver was that of complete inner conformity to the likeness of Christ and complete outward obedience to the law of Christ. "By salvation," he says, "I mean not barely, according to the vulgar notion, the deliverance from hell or going to heaven, but the renewal of our souls after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness." With a kind of sublime audacity he took up once more the Master's long-abandoned appeal to the divine within us: "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Christian perfection, he explains, is not exemption from ig-

norance or error or infirmity or temptation, but simply the complete dominance in the life of the principle of love, love to God and love to one's fellows. It is not clear that he ever professed to have attained this lofty ideal himself. In a letter dated March 5, 1767, he says: "I have told all the world I am not perfect. I have not attained the character I draw." But he would not suffer his own failure or the failure of any number of his fellow-Christians to shake his conviction "that God's ideals in redemption for the human soul are capable of being realized, and realized here and now; that what God demands, man, with the help of God's grace, may give."

It is doubtless true, as has been often asserted, that Wesley erred in encouraging all sorts of immature Christians to profess this lofty experience, and that he was entirely too ready to accept at their face value the testimony of those who made such profession. A man may be able to affirm with absolute assurance that he loves God and his neighbor, but as to whether he can declare with equal certainty that he loves God and his neighbor with all his heart is at least open to serious question.

But it must not be forgotten that Wesley lived before the science of psychology was born, and that a disposition to trust too implicitly in those with whom he was associated in Christian service was one of those mild infirmities of his which serve to keep us reminded that, after all, he was but a man. Also we should not fail to keep in mind the fact that his usual counsel as to the methods by which men are to seek perfection and to test their own experiences is thoroughly

sane and rational. Sanctification begins, he says, the moment one is justified. "The seed of every virtue is then sown. From that moment the believer gradually dies to sin and grows in grace." But this healthful and harmonious development of the spiritual life is conditioned upon fidelity in service and in the use of all the means of grace. We are to wait for the change that is to bring us into complete conformity to the likeness of Christ, he tells us, "not in careless indifference or indolent inactivity, but in vigorous, universal obedience, in a zealous keeping of all the commandments—and in taking up our cross daily, as well as in earnest prayer and fasting and in close attendance upon all the ordinances of God." In other words, while all spiritual blessings are divine gifts, they are bestowed only upon condition of obedience to the great fundamental laws of life. Each of us must, in this sense, work out his salvation, or, as Wesley puts it, "work *for* as well as from life."

Furthermore, Wesley guards his followers against fanaticism and undue haste in professing the experience of perfect love by reminding them what profound implications such an experience must carry with it. The complete enthronement of love in the heart means its purification from "all revengeful passions, from envy, malice, and wrath, from every unkind temper or malign affection." It means also the complete fashioning of the outward life after the example of Christ. A man in whose life love has become the triumphant, dominating principle "cannot 'lay up treasure upon earth,' any more than he can take fire into his bosom. He cannot speak evil of his neighbor, any

more than he can lie either for God or man. He cannot utter an unkind word of any one, for love keeps the door of his lips. As he has time, he 'does good unto all men,' unto neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies, and that in every possible kind."

The fact, then, that we think Wesley may have been in error in encouraging his crude converts to claim the attainment of this rich and glorious experience should not in the least blind us to the fact that the idea which he sets before the believer is at once thoroughly scriptural and profoundly reasonable. To assert the contrary would be to declare that "God's ideal and man's character must be forever in discord," and that "the Christian religion, when translated into the terms of human life and experience, is a failure." All honor to the courageous, clear-visioned prophet who would not dishonor God and the human soul by admitting that man is the necessary slave of sin, and that the desire of the truly awakened to attain complete restoration to the divine image is but mockery.

V.

It is evident from this summary that Wesley did not attempt to startle the world with any strange, new doctrine. He simply reinterpreted in the language of his own time the great fundamental teachings of the gospel. But although his message was as old as the New Testament, it came to most of those to whom Wesley preached with all the freshness and appealing power of a new evangel. No wonder this message, uttered with profound conviction and reënforced by the noble character and commanding personality of

the speaker, stirred the consciences and awakened strange, deep longings and wondrous new dreams and hopes in the hearts of those neglected and despairing multitudes who came up to hear him out of the grimy darkness of coal pits and from the filth and squalor of city slums. It meant to them the rediscovery of the spiritual world, of the dignity and worth of their own poor, marred lives, and of the possibility of their enfranchisement as citizens in the kingdom of God. No wonder that, as they came to realize their divine sonship and the nearness and love of God, they were filled with joy and sometimes gave expression to their triumphant gladness in ways that offended the sensibilities of the decorous and self-satisfied elder sons of the Father's household. And no wonder there came out of it all a new sense of the sacredness and value of human life, a new spirit of brotherhood and democracy, a new feeling of social responsibility, and a movement on the part of the Church back to the common people which continues even until this day.

CHAPTER XI.

The Itinerant Evangelist.

I.

Wesley's work for the first three years was confined almost entirely to the vicinities of London and Bristol. During this time he was gradually coming to himself and to a clearer understanding of his mission. He evidently had no definite plan of procedure. He simply did the duty that each day made plain in the way that seemed to him best. The occasion of his undertaking the journey which proved to be the beginning of his marvelous career as an itinerant evangelist was a summons which came to him in May, 1742, to hasten to Donnington Park, the seat of the Countess of Huntingdon, to "pay the last office of friendship to one whose soul was on the wing for eternity." Finding himself thus unexpectedly in the North of England, he decided to extend his journey into the great mining region of Yorkshire. The colliers of the country at that time were universally neglected, ignorant, and brutalized, and their benighted and wretched condition was a constant appeal to Wesley's interest and sympathy.

A brief account of this first campaign through the north country will serve to illustrate the plans and methods which Wesley ever afterwards pursued. His first stopping place after leaving Donnington Park was Birstal, the home of John Newton, who had been converted under his first outdoor sermon in London.

Returning to his native village, Newton had related his experience to his old neighbors and gathered about him the nucleus of a Methodist society. Wesley reached Birstal on Wednesday evening after a horse-back ride of two days, and at once sent for Newton, of whom he made diligent inquiry concerning the needs of the people of the village and the country round about it. The next day he preached at noon on "the top of Birstal Hill to several hundreds of plain people," and at eight in the evening on the side of Dewsbury Moor, about two miles from Birstal. The afternoon he spent "in talking severally with those who had tasted of the grace of God." He seems to have taken leave of Birstal after service Thursday evening. Friday evening at six o'clock he reached Newcastle, and at once entered upon a study of the situation, somewhat as a trained general would study a stronghold he was preparing to attack. After a short period of refreshment, he walked into the town. The conditions that met him were at once surprising and appalling. So much drunkenness, cursing, and swearing, even from the mouths of little children, he had never heard before in so small a compass of time. "Surely this place is ripe for Him who 'came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance,'" is his significant reflection. Saturday he spent in conversing with sundry persons from whom he hoped to gain further information. Being now ready for the attack upon this stronghold of wickedness, at seven o'clock Sunday morning he walked down to Sandgate, the poorest and most contemptible part of the town, and, standing at the end of the street with John Taylor, his

traveling companion, began to sing that magnificent hymn of praise and thanksgiving, the one hundredth Psalm. The selection is significant. It shows that Wesley's method of approach to the forlorn and the miserable was by presenting to them, first of all, the bright and joyous side of religion. His singing attracted a small company of curious listeners, who soon increased to four or five hundred, and by the time he had done preaching to twelve or fifteen hundred. Observing that the people stood staring and gaping at him with profound astonishment after he had finished his sermon, he said to them: "If you want to know who I am, my name is John Wesley. At five in the evening, with God's help, I design to preach here again." Returning at the appointed hour, he found the hill covered from top to bottom. "I never saw so large a number of people together," he says, "either at Moorfields or Kennington Common." Note again the text which he selects as the basis of his first message to this vast gathering of Yorkshire pagans: "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." Can there be any doubt that the Christlike tenderness which suggested this selection beamed forth from "his clear, piercing, piteous eyes," and expressed itself in the very tones of his trumpet-like voice? "After preaching," he says, "the poor people were ready to tread me under foot out of pure love and kindness." It was some time before he could possibly get out of the press. The people vehemently importuned him to stay with them for a few days, or even for one day; but, having promised to be at Birstal on Tuesday night, he was compelled to decline their pressing invi-

tation. But he had found another place of sore need and another open door, and Newcastle was destined to become one of the chief centers of his evangelistic labors and one of the most striking illustrations of the saving power of the gospel. His first sermon in the city was preached on the last day of May, 1742. He made a second visit the following autumn, and a third in the early part of the next year. On the occasion of the second visit he purchased a plot of ground and laid the foundation of what he afterwards called "The Orphan House," but which was really orphanage, schoolhouse, and church in one. When he entered upon this undertaking, which was to cost seven hundred pounds, he had only a few shillings in his pocket, and many predicted that it would never be finished; but Wesley was of another mind, "nothing doubting but, as it was begun for God's sake, he would provide what was needed for the finishing of it." His faith was not in vain. Two weeks later a generous Quaker sent him a gift of one hundred pounds, explaining that in a dream he had seen Wesley surrounded by a large flock of sheep that he knew not what to do with, and so had determined to help him to house them. On the 25th of the following March Wesley had the privilege of preaching for the first time in the shell of the building. "The Orphan House," says Telford, "had a blessed history. Its school, under the care of a master and mistress, provided for forty poor children. One of the first Sunday schools in the north, with a thousand scholars, met there. It had its Bible Society before the British and Foreign Bible Society was established."

II.

An incident of his trip back to Birstal may serve to show how diligent Wesley was in proclaiming the message with which his heart was now aflame, and how effective he was as a witness not only before great congregations but also in individual converse with his fellows. As he was riding through Knaresborough a young man stopped him in the street and earnestly desired him to go to his house. To this Wesley consented, and, on reaching the place, learned that a short conversation he had had with a man as he went through the town on his way to Newcastle had set many in a flame, and that the sermon he gave him had traveled from one end of the town to the other. While he was still talking with this earnest seeker a woman came and desired to speak with him. He went with her to her house, where he found five or six of her friends awaiting him. "We spent an hour in prayer," he adds, "and all our spirits were refreshed."

Thursday evening he reached Birstal and preached to a multitude gathered from all parts on the spirit of bondage and adoption. In Birstal and neighboring villages he spent three days, preaching two or three times each day, and between times visiting from house to house and speaking individually to those "who had or sought for redemption through Christ."

Saturday, June 5, he went to Epworth. This being his first visit to the place since his departure seven years before, he went to an inn, not knowing, as he says, whether there were any left in the town who would not be ashamed of his acquaintance. On Sun-

day morning he went to Mr. Romley, the curate, and offered to assist him either by preaching or reading prayers, but was curtly informed by the upstart young Churchman that none of his help was wanted. A rumor having gone abroad that Wesley would preach at the afternoon service, a great crowd filled the church, whom the curate took occasion to warn in a most florid and oratorical manner against the danger of enthusiasm. As the people were passing out at the close of the service, John Taylor stood in the churchyard and gave notice: "Mr. Wesley, not being permitted to preach in the church, designs to preach here at six o'clock." That six o'clock service has become historic. "I found such a congregation," writes Wesley, "as Epworth never saw before. I stood near the east end of the church, on my father's tombstone, and cried: 'The kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.'" After preaching he went to the house of an old friend, where were many not only of Epworth but of other villages round about, who greatly desired him to come over and help them. "I was now in a strait," he says, "between two, desiring to hasten forward my journey, and yet not knowing how to leave those poor, bruised reeds in the confusion wherein I found them." At last, however, he decided to spend some days in the neighborhood, that he might have time "both to preach in each town and to speak severally with those in every place who had found or waited for salvation." His visit lasted for eight days, during which he preached no less than sixteen times, besides visiting the sick and giving private

instruction and admonition to all who desired it. Every evening he preached in the Epworth churchyard, his father's tomb being his pulpit. Of the last of these services he gives the following account: "At six I preached for the last time in Epworth Churchyard to a vast multitude, gathered together from all parts, on the beginning of our Lord's sermon on the mount. I continued among them for near three hours, and yet we scarce knew how to part." From Epworth he went to Sheffield, and from thence back to Donnington Park and then to Bristol, preaching at sundry villages by the way. After spending about three weeks in the neighborhood of Bristol, he was called to London by the news of the serious illness of his mother. Reaching the city Tuesday, July 20, he went at once to her bedside, and "found her on the borders of eternity, but having no doubt or fear, nor any desire but, as soon as God should call, 'to depart and be with Christ.'" Three days later she fell asleep, while her children, standing about her bedside, fulfilled her last request, made just before she lost her speech: "Children, as soon as I am released, sing a psalm of praise to God." On Sunday, August 1, her body was laid to rest in Bunhill's Fields, just across the street from where City Road Chapel was afterwards located. An innumerable company of people gathered to pay their respect to this princess among women, whom succeeding generations have justly honored with the title, "Mother of Methodism." It is significant of Wesley's stern method of self-repression that, devoted as he was to his mother, no word expressive of either personal affection or sorrow is

found in his account of her death and burial. After reciting the bare facts, he adds: "I cannot but further observe that even she, as well as her father and grandfather, her husband and her three sons, had been, in her measure and degree, a preacher of righteousness."

III.

With Wesley's first tour through the North of England his itinerant career may be said to have fairly begun. Thereafter he had no abiding place, but was always on the road, traveling from city to city and from village to village, like one driven by some irresistible inner compulsion. His zeal and energy knew no abatement. Having once put his hand to the plow, he stopped not to look back or to take counsel of doubt or fear. His campaigns were as carefully planned as those of any military chieftain. The places he was to visit, the times of his arrival and the services he was to hold were all arranged in advance, and, his work at any place being finished, he mounted his horse or entered his chaise and rode away to meet the next appointment. His schedule of work left no interval for rest or relaxation. He literally carried out the rule which he gave to his preachers: "Never be unemployed; never be triflingly employed." He was a bright and entertaining conversationalist, and hints dropped here and there in his Journal show that he was fond of the society of congenial and agreeable companions, but his intense preoccupation left but little time for such engagement. Samuel Johnson, who seems to have greatly admired Wesley, once re-

marked: "Wesley's conversation is good, but he is never at leisure. He is always obliged to go at a certain hour. This is very disagreeable to a man who loves to fold his legs and have his talk out as I do." On another occasion he said to Boswell: "I hate to meet John Wesley; the dog enchants me with his conversation, and then breaks away to go and visit some old woman." Once about forty of his friends, who had come over to meet him from the neighboring town of Hull, were dining with him at Beverly. The pleasant fellowship caused them to fail to take note of the time. All at once Wesley rose from his seat at the table, bade the company good-by, and was gone before they were able to recover from their surprise. They managed to overtake him later on the road to Hull, whither he was riding posthaste to meet an appointment. "Have the carriage at the door at four," he said to his coachman on one occasion. "I do not mean a quarter or five minutes past, but four." Here is an account of a day's work in June, 1786, just before he had celebrated his eighty-third birthday: "Monday, the 19th, set out early; but being vehemently importuned to go around by Milton, I did so and preached there at nine. Thence I hastened to Pocklington, and, finding the people ready, stepped out of the chaise and preached without delay. We reached Swinfleet between six and seven, having gone in all seventy-six miles. A numerous congregation was assembled under the tall trees. Sufficient for this day was the labor thereof; but still I was no more tired than when I arose in the morning." On the 23d of June, two years later, he tells us he rode from Birmingham to

Hotham in the morning and preached at nine o'clock to a large and serious congregation. At eleven he preached with much enlargement of heart in the new chapel at Market Wreighton, and immediately afterwards at Pocklington, in a house that was like an oven, finally closing the day's work with a sermon at York in the evening. It was his custom to rise at four, and wherever it was possible to preach at five. Often he preached again at eight, and then at two or three subsequent hours during the course of the day, meanwhile riding from forty to sixty miles to reach his various appointments. It is estimated that during his itinerant career he traveled two hundred and fifty thousand miles, the equivalent of ten times the circumference of the earth, and preached more than forty thousand times. He rode on horseback until he was disabled by a serious accident in his sixty-ninth year. After that he generally traveled in a coach. A journey of eighty or ninety miles a day with two or three services by the way was by no means uncommon. He never permitted bad roads, swollen streams, or inclement weather to deter him from meeting his engagements. He thus describes a journey from Sandhutton to Newcastle in February, 1745: "We found the roads abundantly worse than they had been the day before, not only because the snows were deeper, which made the causeways in many places impassable, but likewise because the hard frost, succeeding the thaw, had made all the ground like glass. We were often obliged to walk, it being impossible to ride, and our horses several times fell down while we were leading them, but not once while we were riding them

during the whole journey. It was half past eight before we got to Gateshead Fell, which appeared like a great pathless waste of white. The snow filling up and covering all the roads, we were at a loss how to proceed, when an honest man of Newcastle overtook and guided us safe into the town. Many a rough journey have I had before, but one like this I never had, between wind and hail and rain, and ice and snow, and driving sleet and piercing cold." But many similar experiences he was to have in subsequent years. In a number of places he reached his preaching place fairly incased in a sheet of ice, and, after taking a few moments to thaw out, proceeded with his service. His life was often imperiled by bad roads and swollen streams. Time after time he was warned that to undertake a contemplated journey would be sheer madness, but, heedless of warnings, he would commit himself to the care of the Great Guide and fearlessly face whatever dangers might lie between him and the work he had engaged to do for his Lord.

IV.

During the earlier years of his work Wesley was often assailed by bitter persecution. Parish priests preached against him, uttering all sorts of vile slanders and filling the minds of the ignorant people with suspicion and prejudice. Many times he was attacked by vicious mobs, and in more than one instance barely escaped with his life. In Staffordshire in 1743 rioting continued at intervals for several months, and services had for a time to be discontinued. On the occasion of a visit to Wednesbury during this season

of persecution Wesley was for several hours in the hands of an infuriated mob, and his final escape was so marvelous as to appear well-nigh miraculous. After giving an account in his Journal of this hazardous experience, he adds: "By how gentle degrees does God prepare us for his will! Two years ago a piece of brick grazed my shoulders. It was a year after that the stone struck me between the eyes. Last month I received one blow, and this evening two, one before we came into the town and one after we were gone out; but both were as nothing. For though one man struck me on the breast with all his might and the other on the mouth with such force that the blood gushed out immediately, I felt no more pain from either than if they had touched me with a straw."

Persecution, instead of terrifying him, served only to intensify his zeal. The very ignorance and madness of the multitudes were to him the tokens of their deep spiritual need, and so a crying appeal to him for sympathy and help. And he had a wonderful way of imparting to his followers a measure of his own sublime confidence and courage. During the terrible experience at Wednesbury just referred to, four members of the society remained steadfastly at his side, resolved to die, if need be, with him. One of them held him by the arm till he was knocked down and dragged away, and even then, nothing daunted, he soon scrambled upon his feet and calmly took his place once more by the side of his beloved leader. "I afterwards asked him," writes Wesley, "what he expected when the mob came upon us. He said, 'To die for Him who had died for us,' and he felt no hurry or

fear, but calmly waited till God should require his soul of him."

The persecution and opposition which began almost with the beginning of his evangelistic career were kept up for many years; but, being sure he was divinely led, he kept straight on in the open way of duty without regard to difficulties or dangers. No man ever more strikingly illustrated the noble and courageous Christian confidence expressed in that fine saying in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

V.

Wesley did not attempt in his preaching tours to cover the whole of England. It was his aim to visit only the most needy fields, and never to begin work in any place unless there was a reasonable prospect of his being able to follow it up with a permanent organization and a systematic course of instruction and training. Roughly speaking, the boundaries of his English circuit were the sides of an isosceles triangle whose corners were London, Bristol, and Newcastle. Within this territory were embraced the great manufacturing cities of the island. Wesley judged, therefore, that it had a twofold claim upon him: it contained at once the densest and the most needy population. By reason of the industrial revival which gave to England the commercial leadership of Europe, her population increased during the last half of the eighteenth century fully fifty per cent, and this increase was especially marked in the great commercial and manufacturing centers. The movement of population

from the country to the city, which has continued ever since, had already set in, and thickly settled communities had grown up for which no adequate educational or religious provision had been made. Indeed, the spiritual apathy into which the religious organizations of the country had fallen rendered them utterly unfit for coping with the new conditions or for meeting the needs which the new order of things had brought with it. This accounts for the fact that Wesley's labors were not only confined, for the most part, within a certain restricted territory, but that they were devoted almost entirely to the towns and cities. It was not his purpose primarily to build up a great organization, but to minister to the needs of the spiritually destitute, and consequently he felt that it was his duty to confine his work to those regions wherein the need was greatest. "He left almost unvisited," says Fitchett, "the wide, green fields of the rural districts, with their scanty, slow-moving population. But where the stream of life was deepest, where tiny villages were growing into busy cities, where tall chimneys filled the air with blackness, there Wesley preached and toiled." If Methodism has in any measure failed in her duty to the ever-increasing multitudes of wage-earners whom the exigencies of modern industry have gathered into our cities, it is because she has not been true to the spirit of her founder. For that Wesley and those who wrought under his immediate direction not only labored faithfully but also wisely and effectively among this class of people, the facts of history bear abundant testimony. Communities like Kingswood and the mining regions of Yorkshire were completely transformed by

their ministry. Lecky bears testimony to the fact that the Wesleyan revival "planted a fervid and enduring religious sentiment in the midst of the most brutal and neglected portions of the population." The vigor and intelligence of the industrial masses of England to-day, as shown, for instance, by the fact that they have become a potent factor in the national politics, are largely due to the influence of early Methodism. Indeed, it is a well-established fact that a considerable proportion of the ablest and most influential of British labor leaders have been men who received their training in Methodist Societies.

But Wesley's evangelistic labors were not confined to England. As early as 1739 he began to preach in Wales. There were at that time but few Dissenters in the principality, almost the entire population belonging nominally to the Church of England, but being in reality almost outside the pale of religious influences. Wesley pronounced them almost as ignorant of the principles of Christianity as a Creek or a Cherokee Indian, and this judgment is confirmed by the testimony of Lecky and other historians. But as a result of the introduction of Methodism, Wales not only became a stronghold of Dissent, but the moral and religious tone of it was completely changed.

Wesley crossed St. George's Channel forty-two times. His first visit to the Emerald Isle was made in the summer of 1747. Here he encountered difficulties which he had not met before. The Irish were Romanists, and their prejudice against Protestantism had been deepened and intensified by centuries of political wrongs. While resolutely standing aloof

from their party disputes, Wesley evidently felt a sincere sympathy for them. "It is no wonder," he says, "that those who are born papists generally live and die such, when Protestants can find no better ways to convert them than penal laws and acts of Parliament." He recognized their good qualities and soon developed a peculiar fondness for them, which he continued to cherish to the end of his life. "For natural sweetness of temper, for courtesy, and hospitality," he writes in his Journal, "I have never seen any people like the Irish." In another place he characterizes them as "an immeasurably loving people."

While there were no such great ingatherings in Ireland as there were in England, his ministry in the island was by no means fruitless. He speaks of his work in Dublin as in some respects even more remarkable than his work in London. His last tour through the island, in 1789, was almost like the triumphal journey of a great conqueror. Wherever he went he was welcomed with honor and affection, and some of his partings with those who felt that they would see his face no more remind us of Paul's tender farewell to the elders of Ephesus.

In July, 1789, he met the Irish Conference for the last time, and at its close made the following record in his Journal: "1. I never had between forty and fifty such preachers together in Ireland before, all of them, we had reason to hope, alive to God and earnestly devoted to his service. 2. I never saw such a number of preachers before so unanimous in all points. . . . It is no wonder that there has been this year so large an increase in the Society." The results of

Wesley's labors in Ireland were not great when measured by mere numbers; but measured in terms of influence upon the national life, they were of incalculable importance. And all the students of Methodism know how, through the labors of Thomas Walsh, Barbara Heck, Philip Embury, Adam Clarke, and other like spirits, the Methodism of Ireland has enriched the life of world-wide Methodism.

Wesley also made twenty-one tours through the cities and villages of Scotland, and visited from time to time a number of the smaller islands belonging to England, kindling in each of them the fires of a revival that resulted ultimately in the raising up of a sturdy type of militant Methodism.

VI.

Such was Wesley's manner of life for fifty long years. "He lived," says Fitchett, "like a soldier on a campaign—lightly equipped and ready at a moment to march." Leaving out of the account everything else except his career as an itinerant evangelist, the story of those fifty years furnishes a record of incessant toil and heroic endurance that fills us with wonder and admiration. And yet this marvelous evangelism was but a part of Wesley's achievement. Besides all this, he wrote and translated hundreds of books and pamphlets, kept up a voluminous correspondence, instructed his preachers and stewards, met and catechised the classes, visited and ministered to the sick, collected money for the poor, looked after the building of chapels and schools, and directed every detail of the administration of the wide and complex itin-

erant system which developed under his leadership. The mere physical strain of such a career is almost beyond comprehension. How did Wesley manage to endure it for half a century?

He is generally credited with having been blessed with a most remarkable physical constitution. Perhaps the prevalence of this opinion is to be credited to the fact that Wesley himself asserts again and again that he seldom felt the least pain or weariness. As a matter of fact, however, his Journal, upon careful study, does not sustain the conclusion that "his body was one of the most remarkable machines the world ever saw." He tells us that at twenty-seven he began spitting blood, and that this kept up for a number of years. In 1753 these hemorrhages returned with such violence that it seemed for a time they would terminate fatally. For several months he was compelled to give up his work, and so serious did his symptoms become that, in view of his speedy dissolution, he wrote an epitaph to be inscribed upon his tomb, in which he speaks of himself as having died of consumption. His Journal contains accounts of no less than half a dozen attacks of serious illness. Once in Ireland he was so low that his friends despaired of his life, and a report became current in England that he was actually dead. It seems, therefore, that our only ground for assuming that Wesley had a remarkably sound and vigorous body is his own statements as to his freedom from pain and weariness and the fact that he actually did endure an amount of labor that seems to demand the strength of a giant. But we must remember that he also affirms that when

one man hurled a stone against his head and another struck him in the mouth with such force that the blood gushed out, he felt not the least pain; that, although he is known to have suffered acutely for several years from a serious injury occasioned by the falling of his horse, he barely alludes to it in his Journal; and that, although during the last two or three years of his life he was never without fever, there was not the least abatement in the zeal and energy with which he prosecuted his work. It is evident, therefore, that it would be easy for us to infer too much as to his natural physical vigor from Wesley's own statements.

How, then, are we to account for his long life and his marvelous capacity for work? In large measure, doubtless, by his manner of life. He spent much of his time out of doors. His habits were regular, and, except in the matter of work, were characterized by moderation and temperance. He ate only plain, wholesome food. He retired every night at ten o'clock and rose at four. He preached much in the open air, a most healthful exercise for one who has proper command of his vocal organs. And then his life was not lacking in repose, as is commonly supposed. In a letter dated December 10, 1777, he says: "You do not understand my manner of life. Though I am always in haste, I am never in a hurry, because I never undertake more work than I can go through with perfect calmness of spirit. It is true I travel four or five thousand miles a year; but I generally travel alone in my carriage, and consequently am as retired ten hours in a day as if I was in a wilderness.

On other days I never spend less than three hours, frequently ten or twelve, in the day alone. So there are few persons in the kingdom who spend so many hours secluded from all company." His temper was equable, and his self-command remarkable. "I feel and grieve," he says, "but by the grace of God I fret at nothing." He could compel himself to fall asleep immediately whenever he desired, and the times when he lost a night's sleep were so few that they seem to have dropped out of his mind altogether. Of course we see in all this the evidence of an imperial will, and, without undertaking to determine just how far the body may be controlled by the mind, we are justified by the facts in concluding that Wesley's triumph over disease and his immense power of endurance are largely attributable to his immense will power. And why deny that they were also partly due, as Wesley himself believed, to his triumphant faith in God? Was it not this faith that enabled him to maintain his serenity of spirit through all the trying experiences of his life and kept his soul in health and vigor? And is there anything unreasonable in the assumption that God may work through the mind upon the body, imparting to it strength and renewing its vitality? Wesley evidently thought not. He was no fanatic on the subject of faith healing. He believed in the duty of obeying the laws of health, and in the intelligent use of such remedies as science may furnish us. He wrote a book on physic, and was for many years an actual practitioner. After recovery, through the kindly treatment of Dr. Whitehead, from a sudden attack of flux, he wrote in his Journal: "Of such a one I would

boldly say with the Son of Sirach, 'Honor the physician, for God hath appointed him.'" But he believed also in the power of prayer for the help of the body as well as the soul. "The help that is done upon earth," he wrote on his seventy-third birthday, "he doeth it himself; and this he doeth in answer to many prayers."

Perhaps it would not be wise for most of us to attempt to follow too literally Wesley's example as to work. He belonged to that small company of unique and rarely endowed men who seem to be superior to many of our ordinary human limitations. But his life is at once instructive and inspiring even to the humblest of us, and there is not one of us that may not at least carry into his own work the spirit that Wesley put into his.

CHAPTER XII.

The Church Builder.

Macaulay declares that Wesley possessed "a genius for government not inferior to that of Richelieu." Buckle speaks of him as "the first of ecclesiastical statesmen," and Lesley Stephens describes him as the greatest captain of men of his century. This praise is not extravagant. Wesley did possess remarkable ability both as an organizer and a leader of men, and that to these qualities of his genius the large success of Methodism is partly due there can be no question.

I.

There is not the least evidence, however, that, as at first maintained by Southey, Wesley was from the very beginning impelled by an ambition to become the head of a great ecclesiastical body. On the contrary, nothing is clearer than that when he entered upon his work he had no plan whatever. The organization which he ultimately formed came into existence gradually and as a result of the demands of actual conditions. It was the genius of Wesley dealing with concrete facts and situations that made the Methodist organization. He simply did in each emergency the thing which, under all circumstances, seemed best for the accomplishment of the end which he had in view. That end was to revive scriptural holiness throughout the land, and especially to bring back into the fellowship of the Church and the enjoyment of their spiritual privileges in Christ Jesus the despised and neglected masses of the

common people. The promotion of a continuous and effective revival within the Church, and not the foundation of a new religious body, was what he desired and sought to accomplish.

I have already spoken of the fact that societies within the Church organized to promote specific moral and religious ends had been in existence in England for many years when Wesley began his work. Both in London and Bristol he met with these societies and joined in their discussions and services. The membership of the first Methodist chapel, the foundation of which was laid at Bristol May 12, 1739, was composed of the remnants of a number of such societies, those of Nicholas and Baldwin Streets being particularly mentioned. Wesley's own account of the rise of the United Society, however, justifies the conclusion that he had not at this time formed a plan for a general organization. This came several months later. In the latter part of 1739 eight or ten serious persons came to him in London for spiritual counsel. He arranged for a weekly meeting with these and as many others as might desire to join with them on Thursday evening, and to all who came he gave such advice as he deemed needful for them. "This," he says, "was the rise of the United Society, first in London and then in other places."

The demands of the situation which confronted Wesley compelled him to consider the adoption of some effective measure for conserving the fruits of his labor. He could not depend upon the regular clergy of the Established Church for the spiritual oversight of his converts, and he knew that, left to themselves,

most of them would inevitably fall by the wayside. Drawn as they were for the most part from the ranks of the undisciplined and ignorant, it was necessary that they should have religious and moral instruction, and direction and training in conduct, and especially that they should have the bracing and stimulating influence of wholesome fellowship, if they were to remain steadfast in the faith. Organization into compact, closely knitted societies was the plan finally adopted for meeting their needs.

II.

The particular form of the organization was determined by an apparently trivial circumstance. In February, 1742, Wesley and a number of Bristol Methodists met together to devise some way of paying off the debt on the chapel. While they were talking the matter over one Captain Foy stood up and proposed that each member give a penny a week until the sum needed was collected. To this some one offered the objection that many of the members were so poor that they could not afford to pay even this small amount. "Then," answered the Captain, "put eleven of the poorest with me, and if they can give anything, well. I will call on them weekly, and if they can give nothing I will give for them as well as for myself. And each of you call on eleven of your neighbors weekly, receive what they give, and make up what is wanting." The plan was agreed to, and those who had entered into the arrangement at once began their work. It was not long, however, till they began to bring reports to Wesley about the members whom they visited.

One was ill, another was out of work and in dire financial straits, while still another was living in open violation of his membership vows. Then it occurred to Wesley that this was the very arrangement he needed, that adequate spiritual oversight might be provided for the entire membership of the various societies. So he called together the leaders of the classes, as they came now to be called, and instructed them to make it a part of their business in the course of their weekly visitation to note the behavior and spiritual state of those under their charge and to make reports at stated intervals.

The class leaders, in other words, became under-shepherds, each having the spiritual oversight of a small company of his brethren. "It can scarcely be conceived," says Wesley, "what advantages have been reaped from this little prudential regulation. Many now experienced that Christian fellowship of which they had not so much as an idea before. They began to bear one another's burdens and naturally to care for each other. Evil men were detected and reproved. They were borne with for a season; if they forsook their sins, we received them gladly; if they obstinately persisted therein, it was openly declared that they were not of us." That is, the class not only provided the means of effective pastoral oversight and discipline, but also the conditions of a more vital and intimate Christian fellowship than the societies could otherwise have supplied. There can be no doubt as to the immeasurable value of such an arrangement for early Methodism. But for the counteracting influence which it provided, "the mere chill

of the secular would have killed the newborn spiritual life of Methodists." The class made Methodism a genuine brotherhood and brought about such an effective utilization of the social offices of religion as has seldom been realized even in the Christian Church.

There are many at the present time who tell us that the day of the class and the class meeting is past. Perhaps if we regard simply the form of the institution, they are right. But the demand which it supplied is as abiding as the elemental facts of human nature. The Church that ceases to be a true and vital brotherhood, whatever else it may be, is not Christian and cannot have power to draw men to it and to mold their lives.

For a time Wesley himself received and disbursed the funds brought in by the quarterly contributions of the members of the society. But at length, finding this work quite burdensome, he appointed, first in London and then in each local society, men whom he called stewards and who were charged with the responsibility of looking after all the financial affairs of the societies, including the furnishing of help to the sick and needy. For, be it remembered, the interpretation of Christian brotherhood in early Methodism made it include the duty of ministering to the physical as well as the spiritual life. Every society was expected to keep a list of the sick and needy, to comfort and encourage them by frequent visitation, and to furnish them such material help as their circumstances might demand. In the carrying out of this plan the class leaders and the stewards were expected to co-

operate, the former reporting to the latter such cases of need as they might find in their weekly visits.

Another feature of Wesley's early societies, known as the band, which he adopted from the Moravians, was of much more doubtful value. It savored too much of the confessional, and was perhaps not without some of its serious dangers.

III.

Wesley had but fairly entered upon his work when it became apparent that he and his brother could reach but a small proportion of the vast multitudes who were in sore need of the message which they felt called to proclaim. The number of clergymen of the Established Church upon whose coöperation he could rely was so small as to offer but little relief. He was soon brought face to face, therefore, with the question as to where he was to look for willing and capable helpers. The question was answered in an unexpected way. In the spring of 1739 Whitefield proposed that John Cennick, a converted land surveyor of Reading, should be appointed master of the recently projected Kingswood school. Having been notified of the plan, Cennick on the 11th of June set off on foot for Bristol. On reaching the city he found that Wesley had gone to London, and while waiting for his return he was invited to go out to Kingswood to hear a young man read a sermon to the colliers. The expected reader, however, did not arrive, and so Cennick was requested to take his place. Reluctantly consenting, he preached a sermon, and he says that the Lord bore witness with his words, insomuch that many believed in that hour. A few

days later Wesley returned to Bristol, but instead of restraining he seems to have encouraged Cennick in his transgression of the rules of ecclesiastical propriety. It appears, however, that he regarded the case as exceptional. At any rate, it is quite clear that he had no thought as yet of making the employment of lay preachers a prominent and permanent feature of his work. He tolerated rather than authorized. Still, the situation was puzzling to him. On the one side were his High Church prejudices, and on the other the crying need of the neglected masses, the indifference of the great body of the authorized clergy, and the readiness of consecrated and strong-minded men like Cennick, Mayfield, and Nelson to render just the service which the conditions so sorely demanded. One day in the early part of the year 1740 word came to Bristol that Thomas Maxfield, who had been converted during the previous year, had been preaching before the Foundry Society. Wesley was greatly disturbed by the news, and at once hastened up to London to put a stop to the unauthorized procedure. Upon reaching the Foundry, however, he took counsel with his mother, and her wise words not only served to abate his sacerdotal wrath, but to change entirely his view of the case. "John," she said, "take care what you do with respect to that young man, for he is as surely called by God to preach as you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching, and hear him yourself." Wesley took her advice, and his stubborn prejudice at once yielded to the stern logic of facts. He held his opinions with the usual English tenacity, but always kept an open mind. He did not

mind confessing that he had been mistaken, and was always willing to know more to-day than he knew yesterday. When he had become convinced that a thing ought to be done, he did not hesitate and hold back through fear of being misjudged or criticised, but, putting aside all mere prudential considerations, promptly proceeded to act upon his convictions. So he did in this case. Within a year after this London visit he had twenty lay preachers in the field.

Of course such an innovation met with bitter opposition on the part of the Church authorities. Even Whitefield for a time was inclined to doubt the expediency of it. Wesley fully understood the seriousness of the step he had taken, but he justified himself on the ground that conditions demanded it. He and his brother were not able to minister to the multitudes all over England who were actually starving for the bread of life. The regular clergy, with practical unanimity, had not only declined to help them but had arrayed themselves in bitter opposition. In this emergency he had discovered a source from whence he could draw willing and effective assistants. Why not avail himself of what clearly seemed to him a providential opportunity? He did not believe that he violated any law of the Church in allowing lay preaching, but whether he did or not made no difference. He evidently held that the Church is made for man, and not man for the Church, and that the interests of humanity are above any considerations of mere ecclesiastical order. It is pleasant to reflect that he never had occasion to regret the course he had pursued; but that rather, as the years went by, he had the calm

satisfaction of feeling assured that it had been justified by results. "So great a blessing," he writes, "has from the beginning attended the labor of these itinerants that we have been more and more convinced every year of the more than lawfulness of this proceeding."

IV.

Wesley's conclusion has been amply confirmed by the verdict of history. Those who sneer at "the lowly birth, the scant training, and the untaught simplicity" of these early Methodist preachers must still account for the fact that through their ministry was wrought "the great, perpetual miracle of Christianity, the miracle of making drunkards sober, thieves honest, and harlots chaste."

A number of causes doubtless contributed to their phenomenal success. Most of them were men of rugged common sense and stalwart character. They knew but little about books, but they knew men. The very fact that they were drawn from the ranks of the common people was in their favor. They knew those to whom they were called to minister, understood their possibilities, their longings, and their aspirations, as well as their faults and limitations. There was a vital bond of union between them and those to whom they proclaimed the good tidings. They spoke the same language and illustrated and enforced their message with homely incidents drawn from familiar experience.

Furthermore, their message came fresh and warm from the great deeps of their own souls. Most of them had themselves been snatched as brands from the

burning, and what they preached to others had been first tested in their own lives. They were not advocates but witnesses. They told with burning hearts "how great things the Lord had done for them, and how he had mercy on them." Their zeal was not a mere shallow emotionalism, but the zeal of a newly found faith and hope and freedom and spiritual enfranchisement in the kingdom of God, and of a consuming love for him who had wrought this gracious and wondrous deliverance. It was the same both in quality and origin which filled the hearts of those apostolic witnesses who "departed from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name." No hardships were too great for them and no difficulties or dangers daunted them. Despised, insulted, persecuted, they kept cheerily on their way, singing their songs of hope and gladness and telling out their message of deliverance with a serene confidence that carried with it irresistible conviction. The names of many of these courageous and consecrated itinerants—men, for instance, like John Nelson, the sturdy stonemason, Alexander Mather, the converted baker, Thomas Walsh, "the apostle of Ireland," and Thomas Olivers, the fervid Welshman—deserve to be held in grateful remembrance by all who have an adequate appreciation of the work wrought by Methodism in emancipating and elevating the submerged masses of Great Britain in the eighteenth century.

V.

There can be no doubt, however, that the success of these lay preachers was partly due to the fact that

they were so largely under the influence of Wesley's personality and wrought in obedience to his direction. "No founder of a monastic order," says Southey, "ever more entirely possessed the respect as well as the love and admiration of his disciples, nor better understood their individual characters and how to deal with each according to the measure of his capacity." The plan of operation which he adopted for them was that of a general itinerancy, such as still prevails in one form or another in all the various branches of world-wide Methodism. The entire country over which the work extended was divided into circuits, and to each circuit were appointed a number of preachers, more or less, according to its extent. The preacher whose name came first in the list of appointees to any circuit was called the "assistant," and it was his office to superintend the other preachers and regulate the whole business of the circuit, spiritual and temporal.

Wesley himself was general superintendent, and the whole body of preachers were absolutely subject to his orders. Like thoroughly disciplined soldiers, they marched according to his command. When, as now and then was the case, a man rebelled against his authority, he at once found it necessary to retire from the ranks. The number of those who did so, however, was insignificant in comparison with the number of those who maintained a willing and loyal obedience. Wesley has often been accused of being a tyrant; but if so, his tyranny was of a rare quality. It was simply the power which an imperial personality, when united with exalted character, large wisdom, and Christlike benevolence of purpose, is sure to exercise

over those who fall under the spell of its influence. He had no personal ambitions to serve. He did not care for power for its own sake. His sole purpose was to develop such an agency as he believed would be most effective in accomplishing the great purpose which he had set before him. His exercise of authority was never harsh nor selfish, but was always distinguished by gentleness, moderation, and consideration for those under his control and direction. His brother Charles, who was sometimes inclined to be somewhat arrogant and autocratic in his treatment of the lay preachers, often accused him of being soft and too apt to be unduly influenced by the pleas of those who felt that they had been wronged or desired the adoption of some particular policy. Wesley regarded his preachers as sons in the gospel, and counseled and chided them as a father might counsel and chide his own children. With most of them he was on terms of familiar intimacy. He traveled with them, ate and slept with them, talked with them in the most tender and fatherly way, and when need required was always ready to share his last penny with them.

As most of them were entirely destitute of either theological or literary equipment, it became necessary for him to instruct and train them, and this he did with the utmost care and diligence. He constantly urged them to read good books, and rebuked them sharply when they failed to do so. To one of them, for instance, he writes thus: "Your talent in preaching does not increase. It is just the same as it was seven years ago. It is lively but not deep. There is little variety; there is no compass of thought. Reading only can

supply this, with daily meditation and prayer. You wrong yourself greatly by omitting this. You can never be a deep preacher without it, any more than a thorough Christian. O begin! Fix some part of every day for private exercises. You may acquire the taste which you have not. What is tedious at first will afterwards be pleasant. Whether you like it or not, read and pray daily. It is for your life. There is no other way, else you will be a trifler all your days, and a pretty superficial preacher." As often as opportunity offered he brought together such of them as could be spared from their work, in order that he might give them lectures on practical divinity or discuss with them some work on rhetoric or philosophy. The Annual Conference, which was the most important occasion in the calendar of the United Society, was devoted to the discussion of the great fundamental Christian doctrines, as well as matters of discipline and administration. The minutes of the various Conferences from 1744, when the first Conference was held, to the close of Wesley's life contain a body of practical divinity which must have been invaluable to the untutored preachers of early Methodism.

But while Wesley was diligent in instructing his helpers and expected them to be true to the great evangelical doctrines which he taught them, he always allowed them large liberty of individual opinion. At the Conferences the discussions were conducted with the utmost openness and frankness, each one being permitted to speak his mind fully on whatever matter might be under consideration. One of the questions propounded at the first Conference was as follows:

"How far does each of us agree to submit to the judgment of the majority?" And the answer was: "In speculative things each can submit only so far as his private judgment shall be convinced. In every practical detail each will submit so far as he can without wounding his conscience." "This," it was explained, "is that broad principle of private judgment on which all the Reformation proceeded."

Many years later Wesley instructed Joseph Benson to say to one of his critics: "I never undertook to defend every sentence of Mr. Wesley's. He does not expect it. He wishes me and every man to think for himself." Thus, while careful to teach his itinerants the truth as he saw it, he encouraged them in independent thinking and conscientious personal research.

Wesley did not stop with instructing his preachers in theology, philosophy, and literature. Well understanding the risk of intrusting to "a handful of raw young men without name, learning, or eminent sense" the virtual care of souls, he felt it imperative to exercise over them what, under other circumstances, must have been regarded as a very exacting supervision. He gave them practical suggestions in regard to manners, dress, conversation, and the due observance of the laws of health.

His rules of conduct, framed with special reference to the dangers and temptations to which he knew they would be exposed, are characterized by rare wisdom and insight. Here are a few specimens:

"Believe evil of no one. If you see it done, well; else take heed how you credit it. Put the best con-

struction on everything. You know the judge is always supposed to be on the prisoner's side."

"Speak evil of no one; else your word especially would eat as doth a canker. Keep your thoughts within your own breast till you come to the person concerned."

"Do nothing as a gentleman. You have no more to do with that character than with that of a dancing master. You are the servant of all; therefore be ashamed of nothing but sin, not of fetching wood or drawing water, if time permit; not of cleaning your own shoes or your neighbor's."

He gave them careful instruction as to preaching and pulpit manners, telling them, for instance, to select plain texts, preach short sermons, preach often to children, and avoid ranting, screaming, and allegorizing. He had a scholar's contempt for pious cant, and admonished them to adopt a simple, direct, and unaffected style in presenting truth.

That his faithful and conscientious dealing with these raw recruits from the ranks of the rude and uncultivated was remarkably successful we have abundant evidence. Many of them developed into preachers of breadth and power; and a few, like Walsh, Clark, and Benson, became profound scholars and theologians.

VI.

From this summary it appears that all the essential features of Methodism, the class, the itinerancy, and the Conference, came into existence within five years after Wesley entered upon his work. He already had, even at this early date, what was to all intents and pur-

poses a thoroughly organized Church. And yet he himself did not so regard it. In fact, it is quite clear that he did not intend to establish an independent denomination at all, but only to develop an organization which should operate as an effective evangelistic agency within denominations already in existence, and especially within the Established Church. This purpose he maintained to the very end of his life. In a sermon published in the *Arminian Magazine* in 1790 he contends that in the New Testament the office of evangelist is not the same as that of pastor. It is the pastor's business to preside over the flock and to administer the sacraments, while the evangelist is to help the pastor and to preach the Word. Then, coming to Methodism, he declares that his itinerant preachers are not pastors but evangelists, that their sole work is to preach, and that they have nothing to do with the administration of Church ordinances. "God has commissioned you," he says to them, "to call sinners to repentance; but it does by no means follow from hence that ye are commissioned to baptize or administer the Lord's Supper. . . . I earnestly advise you, abide in your place; keep your own station. Ye were fifty years ago—those of you that were then Methodist preachers—*extraordinary messengers* of God, not going in your own will, but *thrust out,* not to supersede, but to *provoke* to *jealousy* the *ordinary messengers.* In God's name stop there! . . . Ye are a new phenomenon in the earth; a body of people who, being of no sect or party, are friends to all parties and endeavor to forward all in the knowledge and love of God and man. Ye yourselves were at first called in the Church of England; and though

ye have and will have a thousand temptations to leave it, regard them not. Be Church of *England* men still."

Other quotations from his writings might be given, all going to show that Wesley consistently maintained this view of the meaning and mission of British Methodism throughout his entire life. His position was doubtless largely the result of his inherited prejudice in favor of the Established Church, a prejudice which was bound up with his intense patriotism and which no disappointments or disillusionments were able to change. But, in addition to this, he honestly believed that Methodism would accomplish her mission more effectively as an evangelistic agency within the Church than as an independent religious body. He seems to have continued to the very last to cherish the hope that the Church would finally be led to see her error and to adopt the new movement and absorb it into her general life. In 1787 he wrote to Samuel Bardsley: "Every year more and more the clergy are convinced of the truth, and grow well affected toward us. It would be contrary to all common sense, as well as good conscience, to make a separation now."

His manner of dealing with the American situation indicates that his opposition to separation was based on expediency rather than on the ground that the Methodists had not the right to separate if conditions should warrant their doing so. He actually provided, as we shall see later, for the setting up of American Methodism as an independent and self-governing branch of the Church of Christ, and of course in so doing he expected that her preachers should assume and faithfully discharge all the duties of the pastoral office. And, as

the foregoing narrative shows, his conception of the nature and scope of these duties was thoroughly sane and comprehensive. His plan of organization provided not only for effective evangelism but also for careful pastoral oversight, wholesome and stimulating Christian fellowship, practical instruction in religion and morals, and for the opening up of some line of active service for every member of the society. He took pains to prepare and distribute wholesome religious literature and to make arrangements for the teaching and training of the young. He was one of the very first to catch the significance of and lend encouragement to the modern Sunday school movement. "Who knows," he wrote only a few months after Robert Raikes began his experiment in Gloucester, "but some of these schools may become nurseries for Christians?" In fact, Wesley neglected nothing that was necessary to develop young converts, whether children or adults, into well-rounded, capable Christians.

It is not quite certain, however, that his followers in the various branches of Methodism have been so wise in regard to this matter as Wesley was. It is true that, so far as official utterances are concerned, we demand of our preachers the discharge of all the obligations of the Christian pastor according to the New Testament. Every preacher, before being received into full connection in an Annual Conference, must promise to visit from house to house, meet the classes, and diligently instruct the children in every place, and four times a year he is required to report to the Quarterly Conference as to the discharge of these pastoral duties. Methodism expects her preachers to be real pastors. And

yet the fact that Wesley in his public utterances insisted so vigorously upon the purely evangelistic mission of Methodism has, without doubt, had a tendency to cause us to place unequal emphasis upon evangelism as compared with other aspects of pastoral responsibility. If we had been as faithful and effective in indoctrinating and training as we have been in winning converts, our marvelous record as a Christianizing agency would have been even more wonderful than it is.

The Methodism of the future will not be less zealously evangelistic than the Methodism of the past has been, nor will it surrender those unique features of its organization which have enabled it to make its evangelism effective. But there are signs that it is coming to realize in a new way its large mission as an independent branch of the Church Universal, charged with all the varied and complex responsibilities which belong to such an organization. And if this be true, it may be safely predicted that its growth in the future will be even more rapid than it has been in the past, and that the days of greatest usefulness are still before it.

As has already been stated, Wesley himself during his lifetime determined the policy and directed the movements of British Methodism. The societies, through their leaders and ministers, were responsible to him. The preachers were entirely subject to his authority, each being required to do that part of the work which he prescribed and at those times and places which he judged most for the glory of God. The chapels, which in 1784 numbered three hundred and fifty-nine in the United Kingdom, were held, under a form which he had devised, by local trustees "for John

Wesley and such other persons as he may appoint to preach therein." Such an arrangement was justified by his unique relation to the work and the workers. The movement had been inaugurated by him, the whole organization had developed under his leadership, and the helpers whom he had called to his assistance were his "sons in the gospel." In the earlier deeds to property it was stipulated that after his death his authority should pass to Charles Wesley; and if William Grimshaw should survive both the brothers, he was to exercise it. Fortunately for Methodism, such a transfer of power was never attempted. Wesley was a providential man, and could have no successor. Of this he himself ultimately became convinced, and so, as age began to creep upon him, he was forced to consider the matter of devising some plan for perpetuating the organization and its work after he was gone. Finally in February, 1874, he executed his Deed of Declaration, and a few days later it was enrolled in chancery. This gave to the Conference a legal constitution. It was to be composed of one hundred preachers, the first legal hundred having been selected by Wesley himself and incorporated in the deed. They were to meet once a year to fill vacancies in their own number, to elect a president and secretary, admit proper persons into the ministry, appoint preachers to the various circuits, and exercise general supervision over the societies.

At the time the deed was executed there were one hundred and seventy-nine Methodist preachers, and very naturally there was more or less dissatisfaction with Wesley's selection of those who were to compose

the legal Conference, and five malcontents retired from the ranks. His answer to all criticisms and objections was: "I did my best; if I did wrong, it was not the error of my will but of my judgment." But his influence over his preachers was never more clearly manifest than at this critical epoch in the evolution of the Methodist organization. Whatever secret objections they may have entertained, the great body of them cheerfully accepted the arrangement he had devised, and went bravely forward in their work. And Methodism not only continued to grow, but it grew more rapidly than at any previous period in its history. In 1780 there were in the United Kingdom 64 circuits, 171 traveling preachers, and 43,380 members of societies. In 1790 the circuits had increased to 115, the preachers to 274, and the membership to 71,568.

CHAPTER XIII.

Reaching Across the Seas.

I.

During his visit to Ireland, in the year 1753, Wesley preached for the first time to a small colony of Germans, who, about fifty years before, had come out of the Palatinate and settled in Ballingarrene and a number of neighboring villages. Having no pastoral oversight, they had fallen into evil ways and an utter neglect of religion. But Wesley found them serious and attentive, and his work among them was evidently effective. In 1765 a group of these Irish-Germans emigrated to the New World, settling in the city of New York. One of this group was Philip Embury, a carpenter and local preacher. During the succeeding year another company came over, among whom was a consecrated Methodist woman named Barbara Heck. This faithful disciple was grieved to find, on reaching New York, that Embury and his fellow-Methodists had been hiding their candle under a bushel, and she proceeded without delay to reawaken their flagging zeal. It was not long until the little band had organized themselves into a society and were holding regular services. There was stationed at that time at Albany a gallant British officer, Captain Webb, who several years before had been converted under Wesley's ministry at Bristol and had become a local preacher. Hearing of the Methodist Society in New York, he came down to worship with them and to render them

such help and encouragement as he could. He was an eloquent and forceful preacher, and his presence at once put the impulse of a new energy into the work. Plans were set on foot for the erection of a chapel. It was opened in October, 1768, Embury preaching the first sermon in it. The British Conference for 1769 was held at Leeds. In the minutes of this Conference the following questions and answers appear: "We have a pressing call from our brethren at New York, who have built a preaching house, to come over and help them. Who is willing to go?" "Answer: Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor." "Question: What can we do further in token of our brotherly love?" "Answer: Let us make a collection among ourselves. This was immediately done, and out of it fifty pounds were allotted toward the payment of their debt and about twenty pounds given to our brethren for their passage." Thus was established a bond of connection between the Methodism of the Old World and the small shoot which had been transplanted to the New. Other reënforcements were sent over from time to time, among them Francis Asbury and Richard Wright, in 1771, and Thomas Rankin and George Shadford, in 1775. Meanwhile this transplanted Methodism was growing rapidly, and Wesley's interest in it was increasing correspondingly. For a time he seriously contemplated making a visit to the new and promising field, and would doubtless have done so had it been possible for him to leave the work at home. There was, indeed, need for his presence. Thomas Rankin, who was one of Wesley's favorites, had been appointed a kind of general supervisor of

the American work. There were several men already in the field who were fully his equal in age and ministerial standing, and Rankin was not a wise leader. Even Asbury did not find submission to his arbitrary methods at all agreeable. In a letter dated May 25, 1774, he writes: "Our Conference began at Philadelphia. The overbearing spirit of a certain person had excited my fears. My judgment was stubbornly opposed for a while, and at last submitted to. Our Conference was attended with great power, and all acquiesced in the future stations of the preachers. If I were not deeply conscious of the truth and goodness of the cause in which I am engaged, I should by no means stay here. Lord, what a world is this! Yea, what a religious world!"

Wesley, although generally an excellent judge of men, sometimes made mistakes. So he did in this case. He esteemed Asbury for his sincerity and deep piety, but seems to have utterly failed to discover in him those rare qualities which so preëminently fitted him for leadership in the great field to which he had been providentially called. Several of Wesley's letters are extant in which he insists on Asbury's returning to England and leaving the field to Rankin. What a loss would that have meant to the religious life of the New World!

II.

But Asbury was wisely and piously stubborn enough to refuse to act upon the advice of his chief, and meanwhile another disturbance was brewing, in comparison with which the differences in the ranks of a few

itinerant preachers were insignificant. The storm finally broke, and all the preachers whom the British Conference had sent over except Asbury hied them away to England and left their poor, scattered flocks to take care of themselves as best they could. When the contention between the colonies and the mother country first began to grow sharp, Wesley felt much sympathy for the former. In June, 1775, he wrote a letter to Lord North, Prime Minister of the English Cabinet, which was a virtual plea for the colonists. He averred that he could not help thinking, if he thought at all, "that an oppressed people asked for nothing more than their legal rights, and that in the most modest and inoffensive manner that the nature of the thing would allow." But, waiving all considerations of right or wrong, he proceeded calmly to show the difficulty and folly of trying to conquer the Americans by force. The letter closes with this passionate appeal: "O my lord, if your lordship can do anything, let it not be wanting! For God's sake, for the sake of the king, of the nation, of your own lovely family, remember Rehoboam! Remember Philip the Second! Remember Charles the First!"

It would have been fortunate both for Wesley and for American Methodism if he had allowed the matter to rest here. But as soon as he realized that the revolution was an actual fact his obstinate English prejudice was thoroughly aroused. About the time Wesley sent his letter to Lord North Dr. Johnson issued his famous pamphlet entitled, "Taxation No Tyranny." Wesley read it and, being now quite ready to be convinced, not only gave it his full assent, but

proceeded forthwith to abridge it and, without any reference whatever to its origin, to issue it over his own name under the title, "A Calm Address to Our American Colonies." The address created great excitement both in England and America, and Wesley was bitterly criticised as a plagiarist and a mercenary who had sold his convictions for money and preferment. Of course both charges were groundless. The only favor Wesley desired of the government was to be protected while he was trying to carry on his work; and as for the charge of plagiarism, knowing the friendship that existed between him and Johnson, it is much more reasonable to assume that he had Johnson's consent to the publication of the abridgment of Johnson's pamphlet or that the failure to acknowledge the authorship was simply due to a lapse of memory, than to suppose that he would have ventured upon an experiment in petty wrongdoing which he must have foreseen would be sure to be exposed and to subject him to serious criticism.

The worst consequences of Wesley's indiscretion, however, did not fall upon himself but upon his fellow-workers in America. Methodism at once fell under ban among the patriotic colonists, and the only wonder is that it was able to rally so quickly after the deluge of blood was over. Asbury, who felt the full force of the suspicion and opposition that had been brought about by Wesley's misguided patriotism, comments thus on the unfortunate affair: "I am truly sorry that the venerable man ever dipped into the politics of America. My desire is to live in love and peace with all men, to do them no harm, but all the good I

can. However, it discovers Mr. Wesley's conscientious attachment to the government under which he lives. Had he been a subject of America, no doubt but he would have been as zealous an advocate of the American cause. But some inconsiderate persons have taken occasion to censure the Methodists in America on account of Mr. Wesley's political sentiments."

III.

But Methodism had a providential mission in the New World, and so survived in spite of obstacles and hindrances. For eleven years (1773-84) no published minutes of the American Conference made their appearance. But when the historic Conference of 1784 assembled in Baltimore, it was found that the membership of the societies had increased to 14,988 and that there were forty-six circuits and eighty-three itinerants, besides several hundred local preachers.

Up to this time American Methodism had occupied practically the same relation to the English Church as that in the United Kingdom. Her preachers were simply lay helpers without authority to administer the sacraments, and her members were humble hangers-on to the skirts of Episcopalianism's ecclestiastical garment. In England, wherever there was a Methodist chapel there was also a parish church, and the members of the chapel might, if they desired, receive the sacraments from the hands of the parish priest. And, besides, Mr. Wesley and quite a number of his friendly clerical coadjutors were always ready to administer the holy ordinances to them. But in America there were large territories in which there were no clergy-

men of the Established Church, and many of those who were accessible were of such unsavory reputation that the Methodists positively declined to receive their ministrations. This left most of them entirely without the sacraments. It is not strange that under such cirstances dissatisfaction grew apace. In 1779 the preachers of the South, unwilling that their people should longer be denied the Lord's Supper and their children and probationary members the right of baptism, had assumed the responsibility of ordaining three of their senior members; but Asbury finally succeeded in persuading these brethren to suspend the administration of the sacraments till further advice could be received from Wesley. Meanwhile he wrote to Wesley, setting before him the greatness and the rapid development of the work and explaining the increasing dissatisfaction of the people on account of the anomalous condition in which they were placed.

Wesley had already sent two earnest appeals to the Bishop of London to relieve the difficulty by ordaining "a pious man who might officiate as their minister." To the first the Bishop seems to have replied that there were already three missionaries in the field. "True," Wesley answers; "but what are three to watch over the souls in that extensive country?" But suppose, he continued, there were three-score, he still could not in conscience recommend the souls of the Methodist converts to their care, since he knew that most of them were men who "lay no claim to piety nor even to decency." This letter was written in 1780, and yet in 1784 nothing had been done. So Wesley at last decided to take the matter into his own hands and to relieve the situ-

ation by a process which he knew would be regarded by many as revolutionary.

IV.

Wesley began life as an extreme High Churchman, but after his conversion his point of view was completely changed, and as the years went by his High Church notions were one by one abandoned, until nothing was left of his old attitude but a lingering sentiment which had not even the semblance of a foundation in reason. At the very beginning of his evangelistic career he introduced lay preaching and adopted the customs of praying extemporaneously and holding services in the open air. On his way from London to Bristol one day in 1746 he read Lord King's account of the Primitive Church, and was convinced that bishops and presbyters are of one order, and that originally every Christian congregation was a Church independent of all others. Ten years later he wrote to a clergyman, Rev. Mr. Clark, of Hollymount, that he believed that Bishop Stillingfleet, in his "Irenicon," had proved beyond question that neither Christ nor his apostles *prescribe* any particular form of Church government, and that the plea of *divine right* for diocesan episcopacy was never heard of in the primitive Church. In 1761, in a letter to a friend, he affirmed again that Stillingfleet had convinced him that to believe that none but episcopal ordination was valid "was an entire mistake;" and in 1780 he shocked the High Church bigotry of his brother by telling him: "I verily believe that I have as good a right to ordain as to administer the Lord's Supper." His "Twelve Reasons against

Separation," published in 1758, are all based on expediency. These reasons seemed to him to the very last to hold good for the Methodism of the home land; but the time came at length when he was convinced that it was not only lawful but wise and expedient that American Methodism should be set apart as an independent branch of the Church of Christ. To be convinced with Wesley was always to act. It is not surprising, therefore, that, having made up his mind as to what ought to be done, he proceeded at once to put his decision into practice without regard to what others might think or say. Thomas Coke, a Doctor of Laws from Oxford University, a Presbyter of the Church of England, and a man of fervid piety and flaming missionary zeal, had for a number of years been actively associated with Methodism, and had become one of Wesley's trusted and honored counselors. Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey were two of his faithful and capable preachers. These men he judged to be the fittest instruments at his command for carrying out the plan which he had formed for Methodism in America, and he determined to formally set them apart for the work. The momentous step was taken in Bristol on September 1, 1784. Whatcoat gives the following account of it in his Journal:

> September 1, 1784, Rev. John Wesley, Thomas Coke, and James Creighton, Presbyters of the Church of England, formed a presbytery and ordained Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey deacons; and on September 2, by the same hands, etc., Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey were ordained elders, and Thomas Coke, LL.D., was ordained superintendent for the Church of God under our care in North America.

Wesley commissioned Coke to ordain Francis Asbury as "joint superintendent," and wrote a letter to be circulated among the American societies in which he explained and justified the step he had taken. This letter shows that Wesley was absolutely clear as to the wisdom of the course he had adopted. It concludes with this significant paragraph:

> As our American brethren are now totally disentangled both from the State and the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty simply to follow the Scriptures and the Primitive Church, and we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty wherewith God hath so strangely set them free.

V.

Wesley's action at once raised a storm of criticism not only on the part of Churchmen, but also among Dissenters as well. Of course the former looked upon the whole business as subversive of the fundamental principles of Church order. Charles Wesley was especially grieved. In April, 1785, he wrote a long letter to a brother clergyman, in which he declares that his brother "has renounced the principles and practice of his whole life; that he has acted contrary to all his declarations, protestations, and writings, robbed his friends of their boasting, and left an indelible blot on his name as long as it shall be remembered." "Thus," he continues, "our partnership is dissolved, but not our friendship. I have taken him for better or for worse, till death do us part or, rather, reunite us in love inseparable." The letter closes with a gloomy prophecy for the future of the "new sect of

Presbyterians," as he is pleased to term them. "They will lose all their influence and importance; they will turn aside in vain janglings; they will settle again upon their lees and, like other sects of Dissenters, come to nothing." All of which goes to prove that whatever other gifts the poet of the great revival possessed, he was not endowed with the gift of prophecy.

Meanwhile Wesley, being sure that he was right, went calmly on with his work, undisturbed by the tumult which he had raised. In 1785, finding sufficient reason why he should do so, he ordained three preachers for the work in Scotland, and continued to ordain others from time to time for several years. Charles Wesley became still more deeply disturbed after his brother's second transgression, and wrote him an impassioned letter in which he besought him to stop and consider before the bridge was quite broken down. Wesley answered him that for more than fifty years he had been in doubt as to what obedience is due to "heathenish priests and mitred infidels," as his brother had termed them in one of his early poems. His conclusion had been that he was bound to obey them as far as the laws of the land required, and no farther. Acting upon this principle, he had refrained from exercising in England the power which he was sure God had given him. "I firmly believe," he adds, "I am a scriptural *episcopos* as much as any man in England or in Europe; for the uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable which no man ever did or ever can prove." Thus having a scriptural right to ordain, and there being no English law forbidding his ordaining a man

for service in America or in Scotland, he could not see that he had been guilty of any wrong in doing so.

The criticisms of those who did not believe in an episcopacy were based on Wesley's act in setting apart Coke as superintendent of the Methodist Church in America. What right, they asked, had he to ordain another to an order in the ministry to which he himself had not been ordained? Tyerman endeavors to answer the objection thus raised by arguing that the office to which Wesley ordained Coke is something quite different from that of bishop; and Watson tries to explain it by making a distinction between *office* and *order,* maintaining that while bishops and presbyters are of the same order, the former occupy the higher office. We may admit that sayings may be quoted from the writings of Wesley which seem to favor this explanation. For instance, Wesley distinctly says that Lord King had convinced him that bishop and presbyter in the Primitive Church were the same order. And in a letter to Asbury dated September 20, 1778, he takes him to task sharply for daring to suffer himself to be called bishop. "I shudder, I start at the very thought," he declares. "Men may call me a knave or a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content; but they shall never, by my consent, call me a bishop. For my sake, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, put a full end to this." But this cannot mean that Wesley did not regard himself as a scriptural bishop, for he distinctly declared that he did, and on the same ground and in the same sense he must have regarded Asbury as a bishop. What, then, is the reason for his objection to the use of the term? The answer seems to be quite

clear. Wesley knew that, whatever its scriptural meaning, the word bishop had acquired a historical signification of which it would be impossible to rid it. Historically it had come to stand for prelacy and for all the pomp and circumstance of ecclesiastical position, and so Wesley was afraid of it. He would fain keep out of Methodism all that the word suggested by reason of its historic associations. That this was his meaning is shown by another passage in a letter mentioned above: "But in one point, my dear brother, I am a little afraid both the Doctor and you differ from me. I study to be little, you study to be great; I creep, you strut along; I found a school, you a college! Nay, and call it after your own names! O beware, do not seek to be something! Let *me* be nothing and Christ all in all!" In order, therefore, to avoid misunderstanding and all the danger of ecclesiastical assumption suggested by the word "bishop," Wesley preferred to use the word "superintendent." But to say that he did not know that the Church he had set up in America was *de facto* an Episcopal Church would be to accuse him of imbecility.*

*It is evident that Mr. Wesley approved the episcopal form of organization for the Methodist Church in America, and that he objected only to the use of the name "bishop." His biographer, Moore, says that his objection to the title "bishop" "arose from his hatred of all display." But he did not object to the episcopacy itself; on the contrary, he "recommended the episcopal mode of Church government" to the American Methodists, and in the Ritual which he sent to them he gave a form of ordination for their "superintendents." The title, "Methodist Episcopal Church," was printed on the American minutes for four years with Mr. Wesley's knowledge and ap-

Nor is there need for the modern Methodist to re-

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proval before the title "bishop" was applied to the general superintendents; and not until that term was used did he object at all, and then to the name only, *not to the thing.* A letter from Rev. Adam Fonerden, one of the early preachers in America, addressed to Mr. Stephen Donelson, Leesburg, Va., and dated Baltimore, Md., December 30, 1784, the original of which is in the hands of Rev. J. F. Goucher, D.D., will serve to show what was in the mind of Mr. Wesley and the Methodists generally on this subject at that time. Mr. Fonerden, writing at the very moment of the organization of the Church, while the organizers were still in Baltimore, says: "We have at this Conference, *agreeable to Mr. Wesley's advice and direction,* handed to us by that worthy man, Dr. Coke, formed ourselves unanimously into an independent Church under the title of the Methodist Episcopal Church, to be governed by superintendents, elders, and deacons, with a liturgy little differing from the Church of England. The itinerant plan is still to be continued, and by the Church government adopted somewhat strengthened. Mr. Asbury was ordained Superintendent last Sunday by the Doctor and the two elders who came over with him, which power of ordination being conveyed to them by three Presbyters of the Church of England, Mr. Wesley being one, we think as valid as any ordination whatever, it being now well known that in primitive times the office of presbyter and elder (which are synonymous terms) and bishop were one and the same, with only this small difference that the chief or prime presbyter was sometimes called a bishop. With us the 'superintendent' answers to 'bishop,' who is to have the oversight of all, and we think it a better name because modern bishops by being lords are generally devourers of the flock and a curse to the people, and the very name conveys a disagreeable savor." This unpublished letter of Adam Fonerden confirms the view expressed by Dr. Chappell in this chapter. For America, at least, Episcopal Methodism is Wesleyan Methodism; Wesley intended that and nothing else.—EDITOR.

sort to the fine-spun distinction between order and office in order to justify Wesley's conduct. Wesley did not believe that any particular form of Church government is prescribed in the New Testament, nor do we. He believed that any body of Christians that has a right to an independent existence at all has the right also to adopt that form of organization which it judges best fitted for enabling it to accomplish its providential mission, and so do we. Why, then, if Wesley and his advisers believed that an episcopal polity would be best for American Methodists, need we question their right to adopt it? And of course doing so would necessarily involve the making of bishops; whether by ordination or consecration is a matter of small difference to those who are no longer under the influence of priestly or sacramentarian notions.

I would not be understood as maintaining that Wesley was entirely consistent in his attitude toward sacerdotalism. As a matter of fact, he was not. A thousand tender ties bound him to the Established Church. It was the Church of his father and mother and brothers and sisters. It was the Church of England, the land of his birth and of his patriotic and reverent devotion. It is not strange that he felt a deep reluctance at the thought of separating from it, and that, in spite of rebuffs and discouragements, he continued to hope against hope that its leaders would at length be brought to see their error and to lend their sanction and indorsement to the great evangelical awakening for which Methodism came to stand. Nor is it strange that sentiment and prejudice should have caused him

to use the terminology of sacerdotalism for years after it had been abandoned by his reason and conscience. Such, at any rate, is the undoubted fact. He continued occasionally to speak of himself as a High Churchman, while the things he was doing and into which, indeed, he was putting the whole energy and the best thought of his life were in absolute antagonism to the High Church theory. Fitchett closes his reflections on this phase of Wesley's life with the following pertinent paragraph: "Who studies, in a word, this the most keenly critical aspect of Wesley's work finds in it the picture of a man with an obstinate High Church bias drawing him in one direction, a bias due to birth and training and temperament; whilst step by step, led by Providence and compelled by facts, he moves in a path which leads to quite another goal, a goal undesired but not wholly unseen."

CHAPTER XIV.

The Militant Apostle of Liberty.

I.

It is quite common to assume that the credit for the establishment of religious freedom belongs to the great reformers of the sixteenth century. As a matter of fact, neither Luther nor Calvin had any conception of religious freedom in the modern sense. Their contention that the Bible alone is the rule of faith for Christian believers was nothing more than an assertion of independence of the Church of Rome. They did not seek for toleration, even before the civil law, of beliefs differing from their own, nor did they have any such conception of the right of individual judgment as to matters of faith as prevails in England and America at the present time. Even our own Pilgrim Fathers, justly regarded as among the noblest of the earlier products of the Reformation, were unwilling to accord to Quakers and Anabaptists that freedom of faith for the sake of which they themselves had left their homes in the Old World to face the dangers and hardships of pioneer settlers on the wild, bleak shores of New England. The explanation of this strange inconsistency is to be found in the fact that the reasons upon which we base our belief in religious tolerance in the widest sense had not yet dawned upon even the best of men.

Wesley was one of the very first of modern religious leaders to see and accept all the implications of the Protestant position. He believed fully and thoroughly in the fact of individual responsibility, and so in the

right of private judgment. Attention has been called already to the declaration of the first Conference, held in London in 1774, that in speculative matters the individual Christian can submit to ecclesiastical authority only so far as his private judgment shall be convinced and in practical details only so far as he can do so without wounding his conscience. Immediately after this declaration come the following question and answer: "Can a Christian submit any further than this to any man or number of men?" "It is undeniably certain that he cannot, either to bishops, convocations, or general councils. And this is that broad principle of private judgment on which all the reformers proceeded. Every man must judge for himself, because every man must give account for himself to God." Here is Wesley's definition of religious liberty: "Religious liberty is a liberty to choose one's own religion, to worship God according to one's own conscience. Every man living, as a man, has a right to this, as he is a rational creature. The Creator gave him this right when he endowed him with understanding; and every man must judge for himself, because every man must give account of himself to God. Consequently this is an inalienable right; it is inseparable from humanity, and God did never give authority to any man or number of men to deprive any child of man thereof under any color or pretense whatever."

Wesley defined religion in terms of personal relation and of inner life and practical conduct, and not in terms of belief. Faith he defines as a spiritual sense whereby we see "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," and as a consequence "sure

confidence in the love of God." "The sum of our doctrine with regard to inward religion," he says, "is comprised in two points: the loving God with all our hearts and the loving our neighbor as ourselves. And with regard to outward religion into two more, the doing all to the glory of God and the doing to all what we would desire in like circumstance should be done to us." No one ever believed more thoroughly than he in the value and importance of sound doctrine, and yet he would not allow that right thinking is a condition of salvation. "Being alone in the coach," he writes, "I was considering several points of importance, and thus much appeared as clear as the day: that a man may be saved who cannot express himself properly concerning imputed righteousness. Therefore to do this is not necessary to salvation. That a man may be saved who has not clear conceptions of it; yea, that never heard the phrase. Therefore clear conceptions of it are not necessary to salvation; yea, it is not necessary to salvation to use the phrase at all. That a pious Churchman who has not clear conceptions of justification by faith may be saved. Therefore clear conceptions even of this are not necessary to salvation. That a mystic who denies justification by faith (Mr. Law, for instance) may be saved; but if so, what becomes of 'the article of a standing or falling Church?' If so, is it not time for us to throw away high-sounding talk and return to the plain word, 'He that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him?'"

He cannot agree with those well-meaning persons who aver that if one has not clear views of those capital doctrines, the fall of man, justification by faith,

and the atonement made by the death of Christ, he can have no benefit from his death. "I believe," he says, "that the merciful God regards the lives and tempers of men more than their ideas. I believe he respects the goodness of the heart more than clearness of the head, and that if the heart of a man be filled by the grace of God and the power of his Spirit, with the humble, gentle, patient love of God and man, God will not cast him into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels because his ideas are not clear or because his conceptions are confused."

After making mention in his Journal of the fact of his having just finished the translation of a very useful tract from the French, he adds: "How little does God regard men's opinions! What a multitude of wrong opinions are embraced by the members of the Church of Rome! Yet how favored many of them have been!"

While visiting Edenderry he came upon the Journal of William Edmundson, a Quaker preacher, and after reading it made this comment: "If the original equaled the picture, which I see no reason to doubt, what an amiable man was this! His opinions I leave; but what a spirit was here! What faith, love, gentleness, long-suffering! Could mistakes send such a man as this to hell? Not so. I am so far from believing this that I scruple not to say: 'Let my soul be with the soul of William Edmundson!"

Indeed, he finds hope through the atonement in Jesus Christ even for pious pagans and Mohammedans. "Who of us," he asks in the minutes of one of his Conferences, "is now accepted of God?" "He that now believes in Christ with a loving, obedient heart." "But

who among those that never heard of Christ?" "He that, according to the light he has, 'feareth God and worketh righteousness.'" Of Marcus Aurelius, the great heathen philosopher and emperor, he says: "I make no doubt but this is one of those many who shall come from the east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, while the children of the kingdom (nominal Christians) are shut out."

On the basis of these convictions Wesley advocated the most generous tolerance on the part of Christians toward those differing from them in opinions. He held that on the broad foundation of personal loyalty to our one common Lord and Master men ought to be willing not only to recognize one another as Christians, but also to coöperate with one another in a common organization for Christian service; and one of his earnest and lifelong desires was to see this ideal realized in the Methodist Societies. "One circumstance," he declares, "is quite peculiar to the people called Methodists: that is, the terms upon which any person may be admitted into their society. They do not impose, in order to their admission, any opinions whatever. Let them hold particular or general, absolute or conditional decrees, let them be Churchmen or Dissenters, Independents or Presbyterians, it is no obstacle. . . . One condition, and one only, is required—a real desire to save their souls." Again he says: "By the fruits of a living faith do we labor to distinguish ourselves from the unbelieving world—from all those whose minds or lives are not according to the gospel of Christ. But from real Christians, of whatever denomination they be, we earnestly desire not to be distinguished at all; not from any who

sincerely follow after what they know they have not attained. No; whosoever doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother. . . . Is thy heart right as my heart is with thine? I ask no further question. If it be, give me thy hand. For opinions or terms, let us not destroy the work of God." He longed to see a closer union and a more vital coöperation between the various branches of Protestantism. Having heard from a Mr. Tennent, of New England, an account of "his design of founding a college for Protestants of all denominations," he thus records his opinion of the plan: "An admirable design if it will bring Protestants of every denomination to bear with one another." After this wholesome fashion does he counsel "the people called Methodists:" "Be true to your principles touching opinions and the externals of religion. Use every ordinance which you believe is of God, but beware of narrowness of spirit toward those who use them not. Conform yourself to those modes of worship which you approve, yet love as brethren those who cannot conform. Lay so much stress on opinions that all your own, if it be possible, may agree with truth and reason; but have a care of anger, dislike, or contempt toward those whose opinions differ from yours."

And the advice which he gave to others upon this point he exemplified in his own life. "I am a member of the Church of England," he affirms, "but I love good men of every Church." One of the records in his Journal—and there are many of like tenor—runs thus: "I had the satisfaction of conversing with a Quaker, and afterwards with an Anabaptist, who, I trust, have a

large measure of the love of God shed abroad in their hearts. O may those in every persuasion who are of this spirit increase a thousandfold, how many soever they may be!" One of his intimate and lifelong friends was a Catholic priest named Adams. He entertained him for a week in his Orphans' House in Newcastle at a time when Catholicism was proscribed in England and when a Catholic priest was regarded by the public with suspicion and abhorrence. Adams lived in the remote village of Osmotherly, and Wesley always made a point of calling on him when visiting the place. The record of one of these visits concludes thus: "I found my old friend was just dead, after having lived a recluse life for near fifty years. From one that attended him I learned that the sting of death was gone and he calmly delivered up his soul to God."

II.

Such was the breadth, the catholicity, the noble tolerance of the founder of Methodism. And yet, strange as it may seem, no great religious leader ever met with more bitter and determined opposition. During all the earlier part of his ministry he had to face the open and active hostility of the clergy of the Established Church. He was attacked from hundreds of pulpits as well as in current periodicals and through books and pamphlets. Rev. Richard Green gives the titles of three hundred and thirty-two anti-Methodist publications issued before 1762, nearly all of which were written by Churchmen. Most of these were in the usual style of the controversial literature of that day. The resources of our versatile English tongue

were fairly exhausted in vilification and abuse. There is scarcely a crime in the catalogue of which Wesley was not accused. He was a traitor to his country, a Jesuit and a Papist in disguise, a modern Dives who robbed the poor in order to fill his own coffers, an ambitious hypocrite who practiced upon the credulity of the ignorant to further his own selfish ends, an atheistical iconoclast bent on upsetting all reverend traditions and time-honored usages, a vulgar enthusiast spreading an irrational frenzy over the country and turning the heads of the poor, deluded people. Some of the onslaughts came from the high dignitaries of the Church. Gibson, Bishop of London, after sundry indirect attacks, at length issued an address to his clergy in which the Methodists, along with the Moravians, are arraigned as "enemies who give shameful disturbance to the parochial clergy and use very unwarrantable methods to prejudice their people against them and to seduce their flocks from them;" and "who agree in annoying the established ministry and in drawing over to themselves the lowest and most ignorant of the people by pretenses of greater sanctity." And this mild introduction is followed by a detailed criticism of Methodist teaching, the chief value of which is that it shows that the good bishop, notwithstanding his usual timidity, was bold enough to undertake the task of writing about a matter concerning which he had not taken the pains to inform himself.

In 1747 George Lavington, Bishop of Exeter, issued a pamphlet in two parts entitled, "The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared," the whole purport of which was to prove that Wesley and White-

field were but Jesuits in disguise. The publication is full of personal abuse and misrepresentation, and of coarse and vulgar invective. The Methodists are characterized as "a set of pretended reformers, a dangerous and presumptuous sect animated with an enthusiastical and fanatical spirit," given over to "sanctified irregularities, low fooleries, and high pretensions." In a later pamphlet issued in reply to Wesley's rejoinder to his first effusion, the reverend buffoon grows still more violent, charging the Methodists in general with "the black art of calumny, with excessive pride and vanity, with disorderly practices, and with skepticisms and disbeliefs of God and Christ," and Wesley in particular with "sophistry, prevarication, evasion, pertness, conceitedness, scurrility, sauciness, and effrontery."

Two other bishops, Horne of Norwich and Warburton of Gloucester, joined later in the onfall upon Wesley and the Methodists. The latter was the great ecclesiastical bully of his day, whose creed, according to Leslie Stephen, might be summed up in the words: "There is but one God, and Warburton is his attorney-general." The title of his octavo volume against Methodism was, "The Doctrine of Grace; or, the Office and Operations of the Holy Spirit Vindicated from the Insults of Infidelity and the Abuses of Fanaticism." He contends that the office of the Holy Spirit was finished when the canon of Scripture was completed, and that to speak of his present presence in the Church and operation in the lives of believers is sheer fanaticism. Turning upon Wesley himself, he accuses him of being false, vindictive, a

coward who challenged persecution and then ran away from it, a wily and malignant hypocrite, and so on through the whole gamut of coarse personal abuse.

III.

Wesley was no lover of controversy. In a brief preface to his first controversial pamphlet, issued in 1749, he says: "I now tread an untried path with fear and trembling; fear, not of my adversary, but of myself. I fear my own spirit, lest I fall where many mightier have been slain. I never saw one man, or but one, write controversy with what I thought a right spirit." He then proceeds to draw a contrast between the usual style of controversial writing and the style he thinks a Christian ought to adopt, and affirms that it has been his purpose in every sentence he has written to show that "he loves his brother only less than the truth." After mentioning in his Journal the preparation of his second letter to Bishop Lavington, he adds: "Heavy work, such as I should never choose, but sometimes it must be done. Well might the ancient say: 'God made practical divinity necessary, the devil controversial.' But it is necessary; we must resist the devil or he will not flee from us." Most of the attacks upon him he passed over in dignified silence; but when he judged that any publication, by reason either of its authorship or contents, might become a hindrance to his work, he did not hesitate to speak in defense of himself and his cause. His training at the University of Oxford had made him a keen logician and a clear and cogent reasoner. He had command of a terse and lucid style, and had a way of presenting his own case

and exposing the weak points of his opponents that was remarkably effective. Wesley's controversial papers present a striking contrast to most of those they are meant to refute. Even Southey, who never misses an opportunity to find fault with him, feels bound to record that in all his controversies, with a single exception, "Wesley preserved the urbane and gentle tone which arose from the genuine benignity of his disposition and manners." The exception which Southey notes is Wesley's reply to the Bishop of Exeter. Perhaps this did approach nearer to the point of severity than anything else he ever wrote, but the provocation was great. It is not easy to deal with gentleness and urbanity with one who treats the most sacred and serious topics with the "spirit of a Merry Andrew." But that Wesley cherished no resentment even against the man who had attacked him so bitterly and dealt with him so uncharitably is indicated by the following entry in his Journal, written a few years after the close of the unhappy controversy: "I was well pleased to partake of the Lord's Supper with my old opponent, Bishop Lavington. O may we sit down together in the kingdom of our Father!" A passage from Wesley's reply to the Bishop of London will serve to illustrate both his spirit and method as a controversialist:

> But do we willingly "annoy the established ministry" or "give disturbance to the parochial clergy?" My lord, we do not. We trust herein to have a conscience void of offense. Nor do we designedly "prejudice their people against them." No, not even from those who feed themselves, not the flock. All who hear us attend the service of the Church, at least as much as they did before. And from this very thing we are

reproached as bigots to the Church by those of most other denominations. . . . It is not our care, endeavor, or desire to proselyte any from one man to another, or from one Church, from one congregation or society to another; but from darkness to light, from Belial to Christ, from the power of Satan to God. Our one aim is to proselyte sinners to repentance, the servants of the devil to serve the living God. If this be not done, in fact we will stand condemned. . . . But if it be, if the instances glare in the face of the sun, if they increase daily, mauger all the power of earth and hell, then, my lord, neither you nor any man besides can "oppose" and "fortify the people against us" without being found even to fight against God.

I would fain set this point in a clearer light. Here are, in and near Moorfields, ten thousand poor souls for whom Christ died rushing headlong into hell. Is Dr. Bulkely, the parochial minister, both willing and able to stop them? If so, let it be done and I have no place in these parts. I go and call other sinners to repentance. But if, after all he has done and all he can do, they are still in the broad way to destruction, let me see if God will put a word even in my mouth.

There is at least one product of this period of controversy in Wesley's life which every Methodist ought to read. "An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion" is not only one of the noblest specimens of controversial literature in existence, but it contains such a clear and concise statement of Wesley's views, and illustrates so admirably his temper and spirit as a man, that it deserves a permanent place among the great Methodist classics.

IV.

It is difficult for us to understand at this distance the ground for the bitter opposition which Wesley met from the Church. We wonder that he was not hailed

as her friend and deliverer, instead of being treated as her "worst enemy," as one doughty Churchman put it.

No doubt a glance at some of the elemental facts of human nature will help to explain a part of this hostility. Green tells us that the English clergy of that day were the "idlest and the most lifeless in the world." It is well known that many of them were addicted to gross and shocking vices. They were indifferent to the needs of the great submerged masses about them, being content to drone out their dull little essays to empty pews on Sunday morning and then to spend the remainder of the week in sport or idle gossip. Wesley fell upon this apathetic company like a firebrand. He came in the spirit of the old-time prophets, his soul aflame with zeal and his lips uttering burning words of rebuke for sin in high places as well as in low. But he did not stop with condemnation. He was overwhelmed with pity for the poor, the neglected, the sinful, and went down among them carrying a message of hope and deliverance. He traveled from place to place, toiling ceaselessly day and night; and wherever he went the people flocked about him as they had gathered about the rugged prophet who came forth with his burning message from the wilderness of Judea seventeen centuries before.

His whole life was a rebuke and a condemnation of the average clerical life of his day. It was an offense to them to have this unauthorized itinerant preaching to vast throngs under the very shadow of their empty churches. With their easy acquiescence in things as they were, they could not understand why this clerical meddler should be making so much ado about the con-

dition of the common people and disturbing with his busy activities parishes that had long been as peaceful as graveyards. What more natural, since they were not willing to repent and mend their ways, than that they should have conceived a violent dislike for the man who made it so difficult for them to be at ease in Zion?

But one cannot read the criticisms of writers like Church and Gibson without being convinced that there were earnest men who opposed Wesley on grounds that seemed to them really serious. They were afraid of the doctrines that he taught. As has been remarked already, the current theology of the eighteenth century was a kind of thinly disguised deism which banished God out of his universe, reduced religious belief to a mere balancing of probabilities, and degraded religious motives to the level of vulgar prudence. Its God, according to Leslie Stephen, was "an idol compounded of fragments of tradition and of frozen metaphysics." And Fitchett declares that the message of its preachers "did not consist of 'good news,' but only of good advice. It was not a deliverance, but a philosophy."

Needless to say, these baptized pagans, sincere men though numbers of them were, did not accept Wesley's teaching. His doctrine of faith, of the new birth, of the witness of the Spirit, and of Christian perfection they looked upon not only as heretical but also as exceedingly dangerous. The special bugbear of the eighteenth century was enthusiasm. It was a time of reaction against the extravagances of the preceding century, and, as all reactions are apt to do, it went to extremes in the opposite direction. Men prided them-

selves on their reason and moderation, and looked upon any special manifestation of zeal very much as we should look upon the signs of some dangerous contagion. The worst charge that could be brought against a teacher of religion was to call him an enthusiast, and the worst condemnation that could be pronounced against his doctrine was to say that it tended to produce enthusiasm. And these are precisely the things that the Churchmen of his day said about Wesley and his preaching. To talk about God's taking part in the affairs of this world, touching human lives, speaking to human hearts, helping men and women to "fight the good fight," would tend to turn their heads, to make zealots and fanatics of them. Therefore away with such teaching; it was not fit that the people should hear it.

Of course there was an element of truth in this contention. The earnest advocacy of any great cause or doctrine that is vitally related to man's interest and well-being is sure to bring to the surface a certain amount of fanaticism, because there are in every community nervous and excitable people whose minds are sure to be thrown out of balance by any profound and strong appeal. This is especially true in regard to the proclamation of the great truths of religion. They appeal to the imagination and stir the great deeps of the soul. The vital and convincing proclamation of these truths is sure, therefore, under favorable conditions, to lead to a certain amount of extravagance. And just such conditions existed when Wesley began his work. Many of those to whom he preached belonged to the neglected classes who for a long time had

had no religious instruction whatever, and the rest had grown utterly weary of preaching that had in it no note of positive conviction, much less any element of spiritual power. It is not strange, therefore, that when Wesley came with his rich and vital and authoritative message the multitudes were deeply stirred, nor is it surprising that under the influence of such preaching some ill-balanced ones lost their heads and fell into sundry kinds of fanaticism. Wesley himself never aimed at such results. His preaching was simple and direct and singularly free from those tricks by which charlatans and quacks are wont to appeal to the feelings of the ignorant and superstitious. Indeed, he was not without his share of eighteenth century confidence in the power of the syllogism and of the eighteenth century dread of enthusiasm. "We join with you," he says in his "Earnest Appeal," "in desiring a religion founded on reason and every way agreeable thereto." So far as one "departs from true, genuine reason," he thinks, "so far he departs from Christianity." He condemns Luther rather sharply for decrying reason as an irreconcilable enemy to the gospel of Christ, whereas it is but the power of apprehending, judging, and discoursing, and is no more to be condemned in the gross than seeing, hearing, or feeling. "I dislike," he wrote to one whose conduct had given him some concern, "something that has the appearance of enthusiasm, overvaluing feelings and inward impressions, mistaking the mere work of the imagination for the voice of the Spirit, expecting the end without the means, and undervaluing reason, knowledge, and wisdom in general." He constantly sought to curb

the excesses of his followers, guarding them "against running into extremes on the one hand or the other." That he should not always have been successful is no more than one familiar with the circumstances would have expected. How to check the fanaticism and restrain the zeal of those whose heads had been made dizzy by the great and majestic truths which he brought to them with such wonderful freshness and power was one of the most serious problems with which he had to deal. That in the main he dealt with it delicately and wisely no impartial student of his life can doubt.

He was frequently blamed by his contemporaries, and has frequently been blamed since, for the seeming countenance he gave to the strange physical phenomena that sometimes attended his preaching. Several things may be said in answer to this criticism. For one thing, it is certain that he made no effort to produce such effects; and when the length of his ministry and the vast number of services he conducted is considered, it will be seen that the number of instances in which they occurred is insignificant. Winchester finds that only about sixty of these occurrences are recorded in his Journal, and most of these belong to the earlier part of his ministry.

In attempting to explain these phenomena Wesley does not dogmatize, but there were certain cases which he could not account for on any known principles. So his conclusion was that "there was a supernatural power in the minds of these persons which occasioned their bodies to be so affected by the natural laws of

the vital union." Are we ready to affirm dogmatically that he was altogether wrong?

After all that may be said in Wesley's favor, however, it must be admitted that there was in him a vein of superstition which left him open to just criticism. He was entirely too ready to resort to the supernatural to explain extraordinary or apparently abnormal occurrences. He believed in witchcraft. He was given to deciding important matters by lot, though he assures us that he never did so until he had given each particular case careful and intelligent consideration. His Journal is full of accounts of strange experiences related to him by those whom he met in his travels; and although he does not generally express a definite opinion as to their cause, it must be allowed not only that he is extremely credulous in accepting them, but that he is evidently inclined to attribute them to some kind of spiritual agency. This peculiarity of a man usually so sane and clear-headed is partly to be explained in the light of his early training. Reference has already been made to the same odd admixture of credulity and reason in his mother and to the series of strange occurrences which so startled and impressed the inmates of the Epworth home during Wesley's early school life. These things seem to have given a bent to his mind from which it never entirely recovered. Furthermore, it must be remembered that superstition was much more common in the eighteenth century than it is to-day. The laws of England still treated witchcraft as a real and deadly fact, and staid judges and hard-headed philosophers like Samuel Johnson still believed in it. Perhaps, also, it may be

worth while to keep in mind the fact that there is still a well-attested body of phenomena which our scientific friends have not yet been able to account for in a manner altogether satisfactory to most of us. "Most of all," says Winchester, "we must insist that this vein of credulity with reference to the preternatural did not vitiate Wesley's thinking in other matters, and that he did not allow it to sanction any vagaries of conduct either in himself or any one else." He kept his feet planted firmly upon the solid earth, and always counseled his followers to do likewise. He was singularly free from emotional excesses. He avers that he never experienced any ecstasies; that, so far from following secret impulses, he makes the Word of God the sole rule of all his actions; and that he judges his spiritual state not by any fervor of feeling in exceptional circumstances, but by the improvement of his heart and the tenor of his life conjointly.

V.

The early differences between Wesley and Whitefield in regard to certain matters of doctrine have been noted in previous chapters. Wesley was a convinced Arminian; Whitefield an ardent and dogmatic Calvinist. Whitefield insisted as a condition of their continued fellowship that Wesley should refrain from preaching on Calvinistic topics, and so anxious was the latter to avoid a break with his old friend that he finally agreed to do so to the utmost extent possible. Indeed, in 1743 he went so far as to make concessions in regard to unconditional election, irresistible grace, and final perseverance which it is difficult to defend. But Wesley him-

self was at length driven to the conclusion that his brother was right in pronouncing all such agreements as "vain;" and at length, at the Conference of 1744, the Arminian position was stated and affirmed in clear and explicit terms. As a result of this there came about a schism in the Methodist body which is perpetuated until this day. Still there was no serious conflict between the two factions until 1770. In that year Whitefield, whose influence had helped to hold the more ardent spirits of the Calvinistic wing in check, died. Meanwhile conditions had arisen in Wesley's societies which seemed to demand a full and positive reaffirmation of Arminian doctrine. A crass antinomianism, closely resembling that which Wesley found it necessary to combat among the Moravians thirty years before, had in certain localities found its way into Methodism. Wesley was always tolerant of what he regarded as doctrinal errors so long as they remained mere matters of opinion; but when they became matters of practice, the case was altogether different. When, therefore, he found professing Christians claiming exemption from the plain demands of the moral law, he felt it his duty to speak and act, and that in no uncertain way. He let the antinomian disturbers understand clearly that, while willing to bear with their theological vagaries, he would not tolerate teaching which he knew to be fundamentally immoral. Accordingly, the Conference of 1770 sent out a series of deliverances which struck at the very root of the Calvinistic error, and set forth in terms that could not be mistaken what Methodism held as the teaching of the Bible concerning the relation between life and conduct.

The publication of these minutes was accepted by the Calvinistic theologians as a challenge to combat, and they took up the challenge with a zeal which ought to have found expression in a better cause. The most notable of those who entered the lists were Augustus Toplady, author of the well-known hymn, "Rock of Ages," and the two brothers, Richard and Rowland Hill. History furnishes no sadder commentary upon the frailties and inconsistencies of human nature than is to be found in the tirades of these self-appointed champions of the divine sovereignty. All three of them were young men without any special attainments in scholarship or experience of life to give them peculiar fitness for the large task they had undertaken. Wesley, on the other hand, was a man of recognized ability and broad culture, who had behind him a long record of noble and faithful service. And yet these tyros in divinity fell upon this venerable servant of the God whose honor they felt themselves called to vindicate with a violence which to-day would be regarded as discreditable to the most disreputable ward politician. He is branded as "the lying apostle of the Foundry," "a designing wolf," "a libeler," "a dealer in stolen wares, as unprincipled as a rook and as silly as a jackdaw, first pilfering his neighbor's plumage and then going proudly forth displaying his borrowed tail to the eyes of a laughing world." He is "a crafty slanderer, an unfeeling reviler, a liar of the most gigantic magnitude, a Solomon in a cassock, a witch, a disappointed Orlando Furioso, a miscreant apostate whose perfection consists in his perfect hatred of all goodness and good men."

These bitter and malignant attacks were kept up for almost a decade. No doubt Wesley deeply deplored the unhappy controversy, but he does not seem to have been seriously disturbed by the slanders and abuses which his opposers saw fit to heap upon him. Occasional references found in his Journal for these years indicate that at times he was rather amused by them. A story has been preserved by Charles Wesley's daughter, Sally, which serves to illustrate the spirit with which John Wesley faced vilification and persecution. Her uncle had promised to take her to Canterbury and Dover, and she was anticipating the trip with the eager interest that is characteristic of childhood. The day before they were to set out, however, her father was informed by a Calvinistic friend that Mrs. Wesley had gotten possession of some of her husband's letters, and by certain changes and interpolations had managed to give them a meaning which was utterly foreign to the intent of their author. These vile forgeries had been placed in the hands of some of Wesley's clerical traducers, and were to be published in the *Morning Post.* Charles Wesley was greatly disturbed, and, sending in haste for his brother, begged him to give up his contemplated journey in order that he might answer for himself and stop the publication. After listening to this appeal, Wesley calmly replied: "Brother, when I devoted to God my ease, my time, my life, did I except my reputation? No. Tell Sally I will take her to Canterbury to-morrow."

Wesley had decided by this time, however, that there are even some so-called religious opinions that tend so directly to immorality that one cannot afford to be si-

lent concerning them, and so he was unusually diligent during these years in exposing and refuting the dangerous errors which had become an occasion of stumbling to so many of his people. Most of his deliverances, however, were only indirectly controversial. He fought error by declaring the truth. The work of making reply to his Calvinistic friends he left, for the most part, to others—and there were a number who showed themselves willing and able to undertake the task. One of these, the saintly Fletcher of Madeley, deserves particular mention. He was a native of Nyons, and belonged to a respectable Bernese family descended from a noble house in Savoy. After a somewhat adventurous youth, he came to England, and, having perfected himself in the language, became tutor in the family of Mr. Hill, of Fern Hill, in Shropshire. While here he became acquainted with the Methodists, and, finding both their doctrines and their manner of life congenial to him, he joined them. At length, upon the advice of Wesley and other friends whom he consulted, he took orders in the English Church, and three years later, through Mr. Hill's influence, was appointed Vicar of Madeley, a position which he continued to hold till the close of his life. "No age or country," says Southey, "has ever produced a man of more fervent piety or more perfect charity; no Church has ever possessed a more apostolic minister." Fletcher had long been one of Wesley's intimate and trusted friends, and had continued through all the years of his service at Madeley to maintain a warm interest in Wesley's work. Being a thoroughgoing Arminian and holding the Calvinist dogma in quite as sincere abhorrence as Wesley did, it

was but natural that he should feel called upon to come to the rescue when his old and honored friend was so mercilessly and unjustly set upon. The result of his determination to do so was one of the most important contributions to the literature of the Methodist awakening. It would be difficult to imagine a contrast more striking than that between the tone and spirit of the "Checks to Antinomianism" and the productions which called them forth. Fletcher is always the gentle, considerate Christian gentleman. He never loses his temper, never wastes time in bandying epithets, but discusses the great principles involved in the controversy with a calmness and dignity befitting his theme and the character of a Christian minister. "When Mr. Fletcher offended his antagonists," remarks Southey, "it was not by any personalities or the slightest breathing of a malicious spirit, but by the irenical manner in which he displayed the real nature of their monstrous doctrine."

Unhappy as this controversy was, as we look at it in the light of history we see that it was inevitable. Calvinism had largely dominated Protestant theology since the days of the Reformation. It had grown confident and arrogant, claiming the sole right to the title of orthodoxy and branding everything else as atheism or infidelity. And yet as the new spirit of democracy spread it was becoming more and more repugnant both to the reason and to the finer feelings of educated people. It was necessary for it to be supplanted in order that Christianity itself might not be seriously discredited in the estimation of an ever-increasing number of earnest and intelligent men and women, and to Wesley and his coadjutors fell the responsibility of performing

the unpleasant task. That, in spite of the difficult and delicate nature of it, they did their work effectively and thoroughly, the marvelous change that has gradually come about in theological thought makes abundantly evident. Said Dr. Philip Schaff a number of years ago: "The doctrines of the Confession are not believed by ninety-nine hundredths of the Presbyterians, nor preached by any, so far as I know. They certainly could not be preached in any pulpit without emptying the pews." In the light of recent events in Church history, it is safe to affirm that this statement is even more emphatically true to-day than when it was penned.

While, therefore, we rejoice in the large freedom and noble catholicity that at present prevail among the great Protestant denominations, we should not forget the gratitude we owe to the faithful and courageous leader and his fellow-workers, to whom we are so largely indebted for these inestimable blessings.

CHAPTER XV.

Philanthropist and Social Reformer.

First of all, and above all, Wesley was a preacher. He felt that he was divinely commissioned to proclaim unto men truths that give to the humblest human life infinite significance and value. He believed that sublime possibilities lie hidden in each soul, and that it was his high privilege to go out among the outcast and sinful and wretched and tell them about the Father's love and the sacrifice on their behalf of his only-begotten Son, and to bid them leave their low and sordid misery and claim their places in the Father's family and their share in the glorious inheritance which he offers to his children. He was a thoroughgoing spiritual idealist, and dared to appeal to the humblest men with the highest motives. He had no sympathy with the idea that the world is to be saved by education, legislation, and schemes of economic reform and social betterment. He dealt with men as individuals, rather than *en masse,* believing that the only way to save the multitude is by saving its personal units, and that the only way to save these units is by bringing each one into living touch through faith with the living God. The accomplishment of this end, he conceived, was his chief business and the chief business of the Church. Like his Master, he went about proclaiming the presence here on earth of spiritual forces and a spiritual commonwealth, and calling upon all alike, rich and poor, high and low, to repent and believe and enter in.

But although he had the prophet's vision and the

prophet's passion, it was not "the passion that left the earth to lose itself in the stars." No man ever kept his feet more firmly planted upon the solid earth or showed greater wisdom in dealing with everyday, practical mundane problems. He put that first which belongs first; but he did not forget that human life is one, and that after the first come many subordinate things that are immensely important. And these subordinate things he looked after wisely and diligently.

We have already seen how, but for Wesley's intelligent organization and direction of the religious forces brought into existence through the revival, its results might have been comparatively evanescent. Let us now see how its power and influence were enhanced by his practical sagacity in other directions.

I.

He was a thorough believer in education, and sought in every possible way to elevate the standard of intelligence among his people. Being convinced that a general high level of ethical and spiritual life is incompatible with stupidity and ignorance, he had no sooner entered upon his work of calling sinners to repentance than he began to make provision for the intellectual needs of his converts. One of his very first undertakings, after the opening of his ministry in Bristol in 1739, was the building of the school which had been projected by Whitefield for the children of the colliers of Kingswood. Some years later these children were transferred to a room at the end of the chapel which had meantime been built, and the original schoolhouse became the center of a new enterprise. Having read

certain tracts on education, conversed closely on the subject with a number of sensible men, and made a special study of some of the most celebrated schools of Holland and Germany, he believed he was in possession of a theory which, if carried out, would give to the school he was projecting a leading position among English educational institutions. Kingswood Hill was chosen as the place for the new enterprise, and the old schoolhouse, enlarged and improved, was turned over to it. By this enlargement Wesley was able to accommodate fifty children, besides teachers and servants, reserving one room and a study for himself. The new school was intended "for the children of the Methodists and for the sons of itinerant preachers." At a later period provision was also made for a number of young men who were preparing to enter the ministry. The institution was supported by collections taken in the societies throughout the kingdom. The text-books for it were prepared by Wesley himself, and the range of subjects included in the curriculum shows what his ideas were as to the kind of training young Methodists should receive. Pupils "were to be taken in between the years of six and twelve, in order to be taught reading, writing, arithmetic, English, French, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, history, geography, chronology, rhetoric, logic, ethics, geometry, algebra, physics, and music." A rather formidable list of subjects, and there were no electives! Wesley must have formed his estimate of the intellectual capacity of the average child from the remarkable specimens he had known in the Epworth Rectory. The truth is, however, that the entire management of the school, which Wesley himself planned, re-

veals a most striking lack of understanding of child nature in one who is known to have been so peculiarly fond of children. The pupils were required to rise at four and spend an hour in private reading, meditation, singing, and prayer. On the ground that he who plays when a child will play when a man, no time for play was allowed. Each healthy child was required to fast every Friday till three in the afternoon. Indeed, the whole system of discipline was much more suitable for a monkish brotherhood than for a company of rollicking boys and girls. It is not strange that such an imperious way of making saints resulted in hypocrisy and rebellion, and that the school became one of the most serious annoyances of Wesley's life.

But however he may have erred in the doing, his aim and motives were right. He knew that no religious movement can accomplish large and permanent results that does not make provision for the education and enlightenment of the people, and that no education is worth while that does not include the awakening and development of the religious nature. And perhaps when we come to consider that we are not even yet sure that we know how to do what Wesley saw ought to be done and made an honest effort to do, we shall feel less inclined to criticise him. It is pleasant to be able to add that, having weathered its early difficulties, Kingswood finally developed into a prosperous institution, and that it became a source of great comfort to Wesley during his later years. It was one of the three homes in which he enjoyed brief intervals of repose in the midst of his arduous labors. Only a few months before his translation, while resting for a brief space

at his home in Newcastle, he made the following record in his Journal: "In this and Kingswood House, were I to do my own will, I should choose to spend the short remainder of my days. But it cannot be. This is not my rest." Kingswood, removed to Bath in 1853, still remains as one of the leading secondary schools of the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

Six weeks after the first Kingswood school was projected the foundation was laid in Bristol of the first Methodist chapel ever erected, and it is a significant fact that the building was to be used for a schoolhouse as well as a place of worship. The school at the Foundry in London was opened in 1744, and when the Foundry was vacated in 1778 for the new chapel in City Road, a house near by was taken for the school, which was kept up at least through the first decade of the nineteenth century.

The chapel at Newcastle came two years after the Foundry, and with this also was connected a school. All these, with the single exception noted above, were free schools, being sustained partly by the societies and partly by the contributions of Wesley himself.

As has been already observed, Wesley was also one of the very first to take hold of and utilize the Sunday school. "I am glad," he wrote to one of his helpers in 1790, "you have set up Sunday schools in Newcastle. It is one of the noblest institutions which have been seen in Europe for some centuries, and will increase more and more, provided the teachers and inspectors do their duties. Nothing can prevent the increase of the blessed work but neglect of the instrument." It is

pleasant to note the enthusiasm with which the gray-haired patriarch writes about his visits to the great Sunday school at Bolton, which had grown up under the leadership of George Eskrick.

"We went to Bolton," he says, "where I preached in the evening in one of the most elegant houses in the kingdom, and to one of the liveliest congregations. And this I must avow: there is not such a set of singers in any of the Methodist congregations in the three kingdoms. There cannot be, for we have near three hundred such trebles, boys and girls selected out of our Sunday school and accurately taught, as are not found together in any chapel, cathedral, or music room within the four seas. Besides, the spirit with which they all sing and the beauty of many of them so suits the melody that I defy any to exceed it, except the singing of the angels in our Father's house." The next night he preached in the same place to "between nine hundred and a thousand children belonging to our Sunday schools," and in making mention of the service notes again with mingled admiration and affection the sweetness of their voices, the neatness of their attire, and the remarkable beauty of their faces. His love for the young and his tender interest in them increased as he grew older. He constantly sought to impress upon his preachers the duty of teaching and training them. He took the greatest delight in talking with them and preaching to them himself, and is said to have again and again performed the remarkable feat of delivering an entire sermon to a congregation of boys and girls without using a single word of more than two syllables.

II.

Wesley was also diligent in spreading information by means of the printed page. He required his preachers not only to be readers, but also active distributers of good literature. "It cannot be," he wrote to one of his helpers, "that the people should grow in grace unless they give themselves to reading. A reading people will always be a knowing people—a people who talk much will know little. Press this upon them with your might, and you will soon see the fruit of your labor."

He was pioneer in the method of scattering information by the distribution of tracts and leaflets. As early as 1745 he speaks of "giving away some thousands of little tracts among the common people;" and in 1782 he organized a tract society, the first that was ever formed.

He was a voluminous writer, and, besides his own productions, published many of the works of other authors. His book concern in London, with branches at Bristol and Newcastle, was almost from the beginning an important feature of his work. According to Rev. Richard Green, the number of publications issued jointly by John and Charles Wesley was four hundred and fifty-three, none of which were duplicates. More than four hundred of these were issued by the former alone, his various publications ranging in size from a four-page tract to his commentary on the Old Testament in three large volumes. Two hundred and thirty-three of them were original works, the rest being either extracted or edited. He tried to popularize not only religious and ethical instruction, but also science, history, and general literature. He even abridged and

published a popular novel he much admired, Brooke's "Fool of Quality." His "Christian Library" in fifty volumes was intended to supply a complete body of practical divinity, "all agreeable to the oracles of God, unmixed with controversy, and intelligible to plain men." The prodigious task of editing, revising, and bringing out this immense work was accomplished between the years 1749 and 1755; and during these same years he suffered a long and serious illness, prepared text-books for his Kingswood school, and wrote his "Explanatory Notes on the New Testament"—and all this without any cessation, except for a short time during his sickness in 1754, from his regular work of preaching and looking after the societies.

In 1778 he began the publication of the *Arminian Magazine,* which, as the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine,* still continues, being the oldest religious periodical in England. "The vast spread of religious instruction by weekly periodicals and the cheap press," says Dean Farrar, "with all its stupendous consequences, was inaugurated by him. The British and Foreign Bible Society, the Religious Tract Society, the London Missionary Society, even the Church Missionary Society, owe not a little to his initiative. He gave a great impulse both to national education and to technical education."

Wesley was a believer in æsthetic as well as intellectual culture. His Journal shows that he was passionately fond of good music, and he lost no opportunity to encourage the study and use of it. He had a true poet's contempt for doggerel and for trashy tunes, and strictly forbade their use in his societies.

The hymn books used by the early Methodists were all prepared by him and his brother, and it was largely owing to their musical taste and culture that the Methodist movement carried a wave of sacred song all over England. The influence of this noble lyrical outburst in awakening wholesome religious emotion, elevating and purifying religious sentiment, and refining and ennobling the whole tone of religious life, it would be impossible to estimate.

III.

While Wesley sought to help people of all classes and conditions, he was particularly concerned for the welfare of the disinherited and helpless poor. He cherished for them a profound and Christlike pity. The very fact that others despised them and were in despair of them was to him an appeal in their favor. To their haunts of wretchedness and need he was drawn by an irresistible compulsion. He believed they were more sinned against than sinning, and that it was his special mission to be their champion and deliverer. As I have already observed, he knew that their profoundest need was spiritual, and he took care that this should be first supplied. But having done this, both common sense and the prompting of Christian love impelled him to ask: "What else? Do they not need also food, clothing, shelter, medical attention, assistance in their business?" He believed with a certain quaint old enthusiast of the long ago that a man in whom the love of God dwells cannot see his brother in need and shut up his heart of mercy against him, and that the ancient promise still holds good which declares that "whosoever shall give to drink unto one of

these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, . . . shall in no wise lose his reward." He knew also that a man's physical condition and surroundings may react powerfully upon his moral and religious life, and therefore that by helping one to acquire a sound body and to earn a decent support, and by removing as far as possible the outward causes of temptation, we may greatly increase his chances for winning in the fight for character.

Accordingly, he had no sooner entered upon his work than he began to consider plans for giving relief to the sick and needy. A part of the business of the stewards was to look after these unfortunates. At first they were expected to visit and minister to them in person; but the work soon grew to such proportions that a regular army of visitors, selected with a special view to their fitness, were appointed to act in co-operation with the stewards. It was the duty of the visitors to look personally after the sick and needy, to minister to their necessities, and to make weekly reports to the stewards. As early as the winter of 1740 the Foundry was turned into a workroom, and for several months a number of poor women were employed there in carding and spinning cotton, thus being kept at once, as Wesley significantly remarks, from idleness and from want. During the following spring Wesley set on foot a plan to employ the women in the London Society who were out of work in knitting. They were to be paid for their labor at the ordinary price, and whatever was needed in addition to their earnings was to be added by the society, the required funds being raised partly by weekly contributions from

all the members and partly by special collections taken as occasion required. Twelve visitors were appointed to inspect the work, and at the same time to look after the sick in their respective districts.

Perhaps it may be well to remark just here that while Wesley's work among the poor was projected on a larger scale in London than in other places, it was by no means confined within the limits of the metropolis. Wherever Methodist societies were organized plans were set on foot for the systematic visitation and relief of the needy and suffering.

Nor did the great leader turn over the carrying out of these plans entirely to his subordinates. In spite of his manifold cares and responsibilities, he found time to take a personal part in the gracious service. The following record in his Journal was made after he was past four-score: "All my leisure hours this week I employed in visiting the remaining poor and begging for them." Finding many in need of clothes as well as food, he tells us how, in January, 1785, he brought on a serious illness by trudging for five days through the melting snow that filled the streets of London, in order to secure means for giving them relief. A week later he made this record in his Journal: "On the following day I visited many of our poor, to see with my own eyes what their wants were and how they might be effectually relieved."

In the course of his labors he had noticed that there were many who, although not so poor as to need alms, were yet sometimes in sore financial straits. Some of these were in business, and a small loan for a short time would tide them over their difficulties. But there

was no one from whom they could borrow except the pawnbroker, and to borrow from him was generally to abandon hope. Wesley resolved to provide for the relief of such cases by establishing a loan fund. He began the undertaking by collecting fifty pounds, which he placed in the hands of two discreet stewards, who were to be at the Foundry every Tuesday morning to loan small sums to such as were in need and could give evidence of their worthiness. This arrangement was continued for a number of years, and by it hundreds of men were saved from bankruptcy. This loan fund scheme was inaugurated in 1746. Just now some of our up-to-date philanthropists are advocating a precisely similar plan for keeping the deserving poor from falling into the hands of our modern loan sharks.

Wesley also started and maintained for a number of years in connection with the Foundry a home for destitute widows and a free medical dispensary, the first ever established on earth. Finding himself unable to secure the help of competent physicians in carrying on the latter enterprise, he finally resolved upon the desperate expedient of turning doctor himself. For more than twenty-five years he had made the study of anatomy and physic the diversion of his leisure hours, and he believed he would be justified in using the knowledge thus gained for the relief of human suffering. Accordingly, he published the announcement that all sick persons who were unable to procure medical attention, whether members of the society or not, might, by calling at the Foundry on Friday morning, receive free of cost such help as he was able to give them. A similar institution was later opened at Bristol. Wes-

ley's experience in carrying on these dispensaries led to the publication of his "Primitive Physic," which passed through twenty-five editions during his lifetime.

He is credited with the saying, "Cleanliness is next to godliness;" but from the way he insisted upon it we are inclined to believe that he looked upon it as actually a part of godliness. He not only taught his people that it was their duty to observe the laws of health, but took the utmost pains to bring within their reach such scientific information as he deemed necessary to sane and wholesome living.

IV.

To meet the cost of carrying on all of Wesley's charitable institutions and undertakings necessarily required a large amount of money. The question naturally arises as to how this money was secured; for it must be remembered that there were but few even moderately well-to-do people in the early Methodist societies, and almost no rich ones. Nevertheless, these humble Christians did out of their poverty contribute with unceasing regularity and with wonderful liberality for the help of their less fortunate fellows. Wesley taught his people both the duty and blessedness of giving, insisting that no one who was penurious or selfish in the use of money could be a true disciple of Him, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich. It is not surprising that the Wesleyan Methodist Church even until this day is one of the most nobly liberal organizations in all Christendom.

Besides what Wesley received from members of his own societies, considerable sums came to him from time to time from prosperous men and women of other denominations, who had become interested in his work. But, after all, he himself was by all odds the largest supporter of the various benevolent enterprises which he inaugurated. He practiced literally and faithfully the gospel of giving which he preached to others. When his income was thirty pounds a year, during the days of his fellowship at Oxford, he lived on twenty-eight pounds and gave the other two away. Four years later his salary had quadrupled, and yet he continued to live on twenty-eight pounds and to devote the remainder to charity. And the habits of frugality and liberality thus adopted in his young manhood he kept up throughout his entire life. Many of the books and pamphlets which he published after he became prominent in the religious life of the country had an immense sale, and thus, as he expresses it, he "unawares became rich." But money was naught to him except as a means of doing good. After using so much as was required to meet his own modest wants, he expended all the rest in supporting his numerous charitable enterprises, paying off debts on his chapels, or purchasing supplies for the poor. Some of the stories told about him indicate that he was often the victim of the designing and unworthy. It seemed impossible for him to resist the appeals of those who were in need. Henry Moore, who was his intimate friend, says he was beset with beggars. They knew his times of leaving London and returning as well as he did, and fairly swarmed about him with their tales of woe,

knowing that he would never send them away empty. And he was always tenderly considerate of the feelings of those whom he helped. He admonished his poor visitors and stewards always to deal gently and courteously with those who were unfortunate enough to need their assistance, and it was his own custom always to remove his hat to the people whom he helped on the streets when they thanked him.

It must not be supposed, however, that he squandered the greater part of his income in promiscuous giving. On the contrary, it is quite certain that most of it was administered wisely and judiciously. He gave away during the fifty years of his active work more than $150,000, a sum which in purchasing power would be the equivalent of $600,000 at the present time, and, dying, left behind him, as some one has put it, "a good library of books, a well-worn clergyman's gown, a much-abused reputation, and—the Methodist Church."

Wesley's teaching in regard to the accumulation and use of money deserves more than a passing notice.

He had no unreasonable prejudice against wealth or its possessors. He speaks of it as "that precious talent which contains all the rest, unspeakably precious if we are wise and faithful stewards of it." "It may," he says, "be eyes to the blind, feet to the lame—yea, a lifter up from the gates of death." He characterizes the talent for money-making as a divine gift for which one ought to be devoutly grateful.

The first of his three rules in regard to money was: "Gain all you can." But he did not forget to add some important qualifications. Gain all you can without

injuring yourself or your neighbor either in soul or in body. He pleaded for justice and fairness and the exercise of the spirit of brotherhood even in business.

As he grew older he came to see more clearly that one of the sorest dangers to which men are liable is the love of money. He saw how it often brings forth the fruits of pride, cruelty, and self-indulgence. He saw rich men grinding the face of the poor and wasting in luxurious living the fruits of their robbery and oppression. He saw men and women toiling in helpless and degrading poverty, and little children robbed of their birthright to fill the coffers of the idle and self-indulgent, and his soul was filled with loathing and horror on account of the awful iniquity. He had no sweeping economic reforms to propose, but lifted up his voice in passionate rebuke and warning. Taking up the words of that stern, brave old preacher of the apostolic age, he cried to the proud and haughty sinners who were coining the sweat and blood of their fellows into money wherewith to sate their lusts and gratify their unholy ambitions: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire." He besought his people, as the only safety against the insiduous temptation which was sure to come with the increase of riches, to hold fast to their old-time simplicity, to count themselves as God's stewards, and to be as faithful in saving and giving as they were diligent in getting. There is nothing in which Wesley shows greather practical wisdom or deeper insight into human nature than in

the counsel he gave to his followers in regard to their attitude toward money.

VI.

Wesley was also a pioneer in the modern temperance reform. His observation of the awful effects of alcoholic stimulants upon the poor among whom he labored made him the first modern advocate of total abstinence, and the first advocate, so far as I have been able to ascertain, of the legal prohibition of the rum traffic. In the minutes of one of his Conferences we find the following question and answer: "Have those in the band left off snuff and drams? No. Many are enslaved to one or the other. In order to redress this (1) let no preacher touch either on any account; (2) strongly dissuade our people from them." This wholesome counsel he repeats to his preachers again and again. Spirituous liquors he speaks of as "liquid fire," and those who manufacture or sell them except as medicine as "poisoners in general who murder his majesty's subjects by wholesale." "The curse of God," he says, "is in their gardens, their walks, their groves. Blood, blood is there; the foundation, the floor, the walls, the roof of their dwellings are stained with blood." In a tract entitled "Thoughts on the Present Scarcity of Provisions," published in 1773, he raises the question as to why food is so dear, and proceeds to show that one of the reasons is because such immense quantities of grain are continually used by distillers. "A little less than half the wheat produced in the kingdom every year," he says, "is consumed not by so harmless a way as throwing it into the sea, but by converting it into deadly poison, poison

that not only destroys the strength and life, but also the morals of our countrymen." Then he proceeds to inquire how the evil may be remedied, and one of the answers is: "By prohibiting forever, by making a full end of that bane of health, that destroyer of strength, of life, and of virtue, distilling." In reply to the objection that this would cut off a large source of revenue to the king, he asks with indignant scorn: "Is this an equivalent for the lives of his subjects? Would his majesty sell a hundred thousand of his subjects annually for four hundred thousand pounds? Surely no. Will he then sell them for that sum to be butchered by their countrymen? . . . O tell it not in Constantinople," he exclaims in conclusion, "that the English raise the royal revenue by selling the flesh and blood of their countrymen!"

This sounds very much like an extract from a speech in a modern prohibition campaign, and yet it was written when dram-drinking was well-nigh universal and when high church dignitaries thought it no discredit to be partakers of the fruits of the nefarious traffic in alcoholic stimulants.

CHAPTER XVI.

Personal Traits and Private Life.

In the preceding chapters we have been dealing with Wesley mainly as the leader of a great religious movement, with only such side glances at his private life as were needed to throw light on his public career. But most of us like to know something about the individual traits and peculiarities, both of temper and manner, of those benefactors and teachers of mankind whose names are writ large on the pages of history. We like to peep behind the curtain and see how these great ones look and speak and act when the eyes of the world are not upon them. It is possible for us to allow this interest to degenerate into morbid curiosity. The reader will doubtless recall more than one recent instance in which the petty faults and foibles of some eminent man, whom multitudes held in grateful and reverent regard, have been dragged into the limelight and exhibited under magnifying lenses for the delectation of peeping scandalmongers. Such meddlesome and impertinent prying every noble-minded person will resent. We know full well that our heroes, being men of like passions as we are, had their limitations; but we feel that we have sufficiently met the demands of historic veracity when we have frankly recognized and confessed their shortcomings, without being obliged to make a detailed exhibit of them.

Nevertheless, however we may resent this imperti-

nent prying into the private lives of great men, we are bound to admit that a religious leader whose whole record will not bear the closest scrutiny cannot be expected to permanently maintain the respect and confidence of his fellows. It is fortunate for Protestant Christianity in general and for Methodism in particular, that there is nothing in Wesley's life that we need be ashamed to publish, nothing that he himself would have wished to conceal. It was his custom for more than fifty years to make a daily record of what he thought and said and did, and this record he himself gave to the world in his published Journal. This Journal, one of the most interesting and vital works ever written, shows that he had his share of human weakness and that he often made mistakes. It shows also that he never posed as a model or claimed any unusual exemption from error or cherished any of that eagerness, so common in small men, to be looked upon as a notable example of consistency. He was always ready to change his opinions or his methods whenever he discovered that he was wrong, and he records his mistakes and failures with the same downright honesty with which he tells about his successes and his victories. He only claimed to be consistent in his desire and purpose to know the truth and to do his Master's will. And yet when we come to study carefully his private life as well as his public career, we can hardly fail to be impressed on the one hand with the fact that but few men have united in themselves so many noble qualities as belonged to Wesley, and on the other with the fact that but few of those endowed with the rare gift of leadership and called

to exercise this gift in a wide and conspicuous way have been so nearly free from the vices and exaggerations which such power is almost certain to carry with it.

For, as I have already had occasion to show, Wesley was one of those to whom belonged

> "The monarch mind, the mystery of commanding;
> The birth-born gift, the art Napoleon
> Of wielding, gathering, molding, welding, banding
> The hearts of thousands till they beat as one."

Men fell under the spell of his influence as if he had been some kind of master of magic, and the work to which he was providentially called demanded that he should make large use of this power. Such qualities, especially when thus called into exercise, are sure to subject their possessor to peculiar temptations. It is not claimed that Wesley never yielded to these temptations and that his life shows none of the faults which are the exaggeration of his excellencies. He had to combat serious and time-honored errors which he saw were harming the cause of his Lord, and he did not always take the pains to remove the iron glove before dealing his blows. He had to organize and discipline a lot of crude, enthusiastic followers, and felt compelled at times to resort to methods that appear to us stern and autocratic. But in neither case was he ever animated by other than noble and unselfish motives. He was broadly tolerant, loved peace and hated controversy; and when he fought, fought only for truth's sake, and never for the love of fighting or for the sake of discomfiting an opponent. The

charge that he was impelled by an overweening personal ambition brought against him by Southey is now universally admitted to be utterly groundless. Even Southey himself confessed that upon further investigation he was convinced that he was "mistaken in supposing ambition entered largely into Mr. Wesley's actuating impulses." Paul tells us that he was "ambitious to be well pleasing unto his Lord." It is related of Dwight L. Moody that during his last illness, and only a short while before his departure, he one day said to a friend who sat by his bedside: "I have always been an ambitious man." The friend showed his surprise, and then the great evangelist continued with a twinkle in his eye: "Ambitious to do all the good I possibly could." As Paul was an ambitious man and as Moody was an ambitious man, so Wesley was, and not otherwise. When the cry of "one-man power" was raised against him, his answer was that such power as he exercised was not of his own choosing. His wish was to live and die in retirement; but when in the providence of God the call came to him to assume the leadership and direction of the great revival, he dared not refuse. "Yet," he adds, "I was never fond of it. I always did, and do now, bear it as my burden." In his "Further Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion" he tells us how he and his brother Charles had from childhood loved and studiously sought retirement, and how on their return from America they "were resolved to retire out of the world at once, being sated with noise and hurry and fatigue, and seeking nothing but to be at rest."

"Indeed," he says, "for a long season the greatest pleasure I had desired on this side of eternity was,

> 'Creeping silent through the sylvan shades,
> Exploring what is wise and good in men.'"

But instead of being allowed to gratify this inclination, they "were dragged out again, by earnest importunity, to preach at one place and another and another, and so carried on, they knew not how, without any design but the general one of saving souls, to a situation which, had it been named to them at first, would have appeared worse than death." Wesley's Journal shows that his love of and longing for retirement never left him, and that nothing but an overmastering sense of duty kept him from gratifying it. At Newcastle, under date of June 23, 1779, he writes: "I rested here. Lovely place and lovely people! But I believe there is another world. Therefore I must arise and go hence." Like St. Paul, he worked under a sense of divine compulsion, feeling that woe was him if he faltered in the great task to which God had appointed him.

And the authority which he exercised over the societies he had organized and the men he had called to be his helpers he exercised for their good. He wanted to weld them into a compact and efficient organization, and he felt that this was possible only through a discipline of obedience. He knew that this one-man government could not continue, and when he realized that the time of his departure drew near he made definite arrangement for turning over to the organization itself the power which he had hitherto held.

It is a mistake, however, to suppose that he ever exercised his authority without taking counsel of his brethren, or that it was his custom to hold himself coldly aloof from them and assume the airs of a dictator. On the contrary, he occupied toward the whole body of his preachers somewhat the relation of a tender and benignant father toward a lot of grown-up sons. Henry Moore, who was thoroughly familiar with Wesley's life and official administration, says that "arbitrary power so called was exercised from first to last in keeping his associates to that work of God, that wholly religious design and employment, which they all professed to embrace as their duty and calling when they joined him. . . . In everything else he was, even by their own account, their father and friend." He did not expect them, as he wrote to Joseph Benson, to think in everything just as he did. His custom during the sessions of his Conference was to allow a full and free discussion of every matter that came up for consideration, every man being expected to express his opinion without hindrance. Although he never hesitated about making suggestions to his preachers, or even about rebuking them when he thought they needed rebuke, he was always tenderly considerate of them. Indeed, it seems quite certain that in dealing with offenders he frequently allowed his sympathy to get the better of his judgment. "My brother," remarked Charles Wesley on one occasion, "was, I think, born for the benefit of knaves."

II.

Wesley had a number of peculiarities which were partly the result of his early training. I have already

called attention to his rather exaggerated credulity in matters supposed to belong to the realm of the preternatural. Then there was a vein of Puritanism in him which showed itself in many ways, particularly in the earlier part of his life. He had a Puritan conscience which caused him to hold himself under such stern and rigid discipline as would be well-nigh intolerable to the average man. He slept and woke and ate and worked by rule. His life was timed almost like a machine. He had a phenomenal capacity for work, and treasured his minutes as a miser his gold. As he stood waiting for his coach on one occasion he exclaimed: "I have lost ten minutes, and they are lost forever." Such were his methodical habits, however, that in the midst of all his busy activities he maintained an almost perfect composure both of temper and manner. But Wesley's Puritan conscience showed itself in other things as well as in the strict way in which he employed his time. In regard to eating and drinking he was, during a part of his life, almost an ascetic, and the strict regulations in regard to dress which he imposed upon the members of his societies can hardly be looked upon as consistent with those principles of Christian liberty which he so constantly proclaimed.

The results of his Puritan training are seen also in his stern self-control and his habitual self-repression. He had almost perfect command both over his mind and his body. He slept and woke when he would. He never fretted nor worried. In spite of the fact that he was burdened with manifold responsibilities and assailed by all sorts of troubles, he tells us that he did not lose a single night's sleep in fifty years. He had

almost a stoical contempt for pain. One would never guess from reading his Journal that for several years during the most active period of his life he suffered constantly, often intensely. He frequently preached and even started on long journeys when so ill that he could hardly stand. Amid all sorts of excitements he maintained an exterior of perfect serenity. There is but one recorded instance in his whole life of his having given way to his emotions. In 1778, two weeks after the death of his brother Charles, he had an engagement to preach at Bolton. His second hymn was the familiar one much used among the early Methodists, beginning, "Come, O thou traveler unknown." When he came to the lines,

> "My company before is gone,
> And I am left alone with thee,"

he "burst into a flood of tears, sat down in the pulpit, and hid his face with his hands." After a few moments of silent waiting, he recovered his composure and continued the service. But this was an absolutely unique event in Wesley's life. In his account of the death and burial of his mother there is not one word of the sorrow and loneliness which her going away must have occasioned him; and if he in any way ever betrayed the long agony which he must have suffered as a result of his unfortunate marital experience, we have no record of it.

III.

One cannot long associate with Wesley without being impressed with the remarkable breadth of his culture. He was not a great scholar in the modern crit-

ical sense. He was too busy doing things to become a distinguished specialist in any particular field of investigation. And yet in the best sense he was really a great scholar. He was a trained logician, and a diligent student both of theology and philosophy. Besides Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, he was acquainted with a number of modern languages. He read Homer and Plato and Virgil and Cicero as the average cultivated American of to-day might read Tennyson and Emerson. "In his constant and wearisome labors," says Winchester, "mostly with and for people of scanty ideas and narrow horizon, he found refreshment and inspiration in the world's masterpieces of literature." Comments are found in his Journal on almost three hundred volumes read during his travels. A glance at this list will give some idea as to the breadth and variety of his interests. It includes works in half a dozen different languages and of almost every imaginable kind—poetry, fiction, theology, philosophy, history, biography, mythology, archæology, criticism, science. In his early life it was his custom, after reading a book, to make a full analysis of it and then to correct the analysis by a careful comparison with the original. The effects of this training remained with him throughout his life, and are seen in the acute observations he makes upon the works he has read. He always has a clear-cut and positive opinion; and while, as we should naturally expect in the case of one who led such a busy life, his conclusions sometimes show signs of haste and lack of due consideration, they often reveal a remarkable capacity of insight and critical judgment. He anticipated in many respects the methods of mod-

ern historical and literary criticism. He disposes of legendary stories and marvelous tales of adventure in a manner that would challenge the admiration of those now engaged in the large task of rewriting the world's history. He does not believe that there was ever such a nation as the Amazons, judges the whole affair of the Argonauts to be fabulous, pronounces the history of St. Patrick a bundle of fiction, and puts Dr. Leland's account of early Irish civilization on a par with the history of *Bel and the Dragon*. He picks to pieces Abbe Reynal's "History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the Indies" in a style that is refreshingly modern, and is quite skeptical as to the correctness of the commonly accepted estimate of Richard III. and Mary Queen of Scots. His opinion of Swedenborg is given thus: "He is one of the most ingenious, lively, entertaining madmen that ever set pen to paper. But his waking dreams are so wild, so far remote from Scripture and common sense that one might as easily swallow the stories of Tom Thumb or Jack the Giant Killer."

And he was equally independent in dealing with questions of biblical criticism and interpretation. He gave to Methodism a revised version and translation of the New Testament, in which many of the changes embodied in our more recent revision are anticipated. Meredith, in his "Real John Wesley," says: "There are no less than one hundred and thirty cases in the first seven chapters of Matthew where Wesley's changes agree with those of the revisers of 1881." In his introduction to his "Notes on Joshua" he writes thus of the historical books of the Old Testa-

ment: "It seems the substance of the several histories was written down under divine direction when the events had just happened, and long after put into the form wherein they stand now, perhaps all by the same hand."

His æsthetic sense was highly developed, and he was a passionate lover of the beautiful in all the varied manifestations of it. The last half of his Journal is filled with charming bits of description of natural scenery and of historic sites which he had visited. He makes record of at least three visits to Land's End. "I know of no natural curiosity," he writes, "like this. The vast, rugged stones rise on every side when you are near the point of the land, with the green turf between, as level and smooth as if it were the effect of art. And the rocks which terminate the land are so torn by the sea that they appear like great heaps of ruins." On a visit to Wycombe he "took a walk to Lord Shelbourne's house." "What a variety," he exclaims, "in so small a compass! A beautiful grove, divided by a serpentine walk, conceals the house from the town. At the side of this runs a transparent river with a smooth walk on each bank. Beyond this is a level lawn, then the house, with sloping gardens behind. Above these is a lofty hill, near the top of which is a lovely wood having a grassy walk running along just within the skirts of it."

He was an admirer of noble architecture as well as of charming scenery, and found an unfailing source of delight in visiting stately palaces and grim old castles and the impressive remains of great mediæval buildings. He makes record of his visit to Holyrood

Castle, the Tower, Westminster Abbey, and many other notable historic structures, always showing a keen interest in them and often a fine appreciation of their excellencies.

He was fond of music, and tells about hearing the oratorios, "Judith" and "Ruth." Of the former he says: "Some parts of it were exceedingly fine." Of the latter he gives his impression thus: "The sense was admirable throughout, and much of the poetry not contemptible. This, joined with exquisite music, might make an impression, even upon rich and honorable sinners." At Exeter Cathedral he was charmed with the organ, "so large, so beautiful, and so finely toned;" and the music of "Glory be to God in the highest," he thought, "exceeded the 'Messiah' itself." On an afternoon he went with a Mr. Taylor to hear a famous musician that played upon the glasses. "By my appearing there," he remarks, "a heap of gentry attended in the evening, and I believe several of them, as well as Mr. T. and myself, did not come in vain." Such records as these, which might be multiplied almost indefinitely, show that Wesley was much more than a cold logician and a dry-as-dust theologian. He had the eye and ear of a poet, and found a poet's delight in all the varied forms of beauty. And it is interesting to note that as he advanced in years he became more and more disposed to relax the stern restraint under which he had hitherto held himself and to allow himself greater liberty in indulging his æsthetic taste.

IV.

I have spoken of certain Puritanic tendencies in

Wesley. It is but just to add that they were the result of training rather than of natural temperament, and that as the years went by and his whole life came more completely into accord with the views which he adopted at the time of his evangelical conversion all the harder aspects of his nature were softened down, resulting in such a fine blending in his character of strength and beauty as to make an old age of rare charm and loveliness. Back of his reserved and apparently cold exterior had always been hidden a warm and tender heart, and he had always been a bright and entertaining companion. But as he grew older his soul not only grew richer and his disposition sunnier, but he also became more inclined to give vent to his natural cheerfulness and expression to all his tenderer emotions. He did not understand children, but he loved them and showed his love in all sorts of tender ways that charmed and won them. In his later years he often spoke with simple admiration of their beauty and their brightness. "I reverence the young," he used to say, "because they may be useful after I am dead." Southey thus records the impression made upon him by an incidental meeting with Wesley in Southey's childhood: "I was in a house in Bristol where Wesley was. When a mere child, on running downstairs before him with a beautiful little sister of my own, whose ringlets were floating over her shoulders, he overtook us on the landing and took my sister in his arms and kissed her. Placing her on her feet again, he then put his hand upon my head and blessed me, and I feel as though I had the blessing of that good man upon me at this moment."

When Sally, the daughter of Charles Wesley, was in her childhood, she and her uncle were devoted friends and boon companions, and Miss Wesley gives a charming description of a visit they made together to Canterbury in 1775.

Wesley was a polished gentleman and a model of courtesy and politeness. He was incapable of rudeness either in speech or conduct, but the charm of his manner increased as his soul ripened. Two years before his death his Irish friend, Alexander Knox, had the privilege of spending some days in his company, and made a special point of trying to form an impartial estimate of his character. "So fine an old man," he says as a result of his study, "I never saw. The happiness of his mind beamed forth in his countenance. Every look showed how fully he enjoyed the 'gay remembrance of a life well spent.' Wherever Wesley went he diffused a portion of his own felicity. Easy and affable in his demeanor, he accommodated himself to every sort of company, and showed how happily the most finished courtesy may blend with the most perfect piety. In his conversation we might be at a loss whether to admire most his fine classical taste, his extensive knowledge of men and things, or his overflowing goodness of heart. While the grave and serious were charmed with his wisdom, his sportive sallies of innocent mirth delighted even the young and thoughtless, and both saw in his uninterrupted cheerfulness the excellency of true religion. No cynical remarks on the levity of youth embittered his discourse. No offensive retrospect to past times marked his present discourse. In him even old age appeared

delightful, like an evening without a cloud; and it was impossible to observe him without wishing fervently: 'May my latter end be like his!'"

His letters and Journal show that he had a wide circle of tenderly beloved friends in whose fellowship he found sweet and holy joy. In these beautiful intimacies the real man appears as perhaps nowhere else. There is manifest in them all a kind of noble self-giving. We wonder at the largeness of his heart and the breadth of his interests. He finds lovely people and beautiful children wherever he goes, and his delight in their company and in the assurance of their confidence and affection is simple and unaffected. Now it is in Ireland, now in Scotland, now in some large town or remote village of England—wherever his work calls him, there are esteemed and trusted ones in whose society he finds gladness and refreshing.

V.

As we should naturally expect in the case of a man so refined, chivalrous, and affectionate, Wesley was peculiarly susceptible to the charms of noble and high-minded women, and among such were a number of his truest and most helpful friends. First of all in this goodly company was his own mother. In her he learned to revere womanhood, and he was always disposed to expect in his female acquaintances those fine qualities which she had revealed to him. Wesley's relations with women of this high type are strikingly illustrated in what Alexander Knox, whose characterization of Wesley in his old age has been quoted already, writes to Hannah Moore as to Wesley's fellow-

ship with Miss Knox. After transcribing a note to himself, in which Wesley sends a message to "my dear Sally Knox," declaring that he "loves her dearly and shall be glad to meet her at our Lord's right hand," Mr. Knox adds: "John Wesley's impressible nature inclined him to conceive such attachments, and the childlike innocence of his heart disposed him to express them with the most amiable simplicity. The gayety of his nature was so undiminished in its substance, while it was divinely disciplined in its movements, that to the latest hour of his life there was nothing innocently pleasant with which he was not pleased, and nothing naturally lovely which, in its due proportion, he was not ready to love. To interesting females especially this affection continually showed itself; and of its nature and kind what he says to my sister gives a striking manifestation." "Wesley's letters," says Dr. Riggs, "reveal his extreme natural susceptibility to whatever was amiable and graceful in woman, especially if united to mental vigor and moral excellence. He had been brought up in the society of clever and virtuous women, his sisters, and it seems as if he could at no time in his life dispense with the exquisite and stimulating pleasure which he found in female society and correspondence. He was naturally a woman worshiper, at least a worshiper of such women. An almost reverent courtesy, a warm but pure affection, a delicate but close familiarity marked through his life his relations with the good and gifted women—gifted they were, for the most part—with whom he maintained friendship and correspondence."

VI.

Wesley during his life had four love affairs. Two of these have been mentioned before. The third was with Mrs. Grace Murray, one of his faithful and honored fellow-workers. Dr. Riggs, in his "Living Wesley," has conclusively shown that Tyerman's grotesque account of this incident is utterly misleading and does serious injustice both to Wesley and Mrs. Murray. The facts, in brief, are as follows: Mrs. Grace Murray, a beautiful and pious young widow of Newcastle, having become a zealous Methodist, was appointed mistress of the Preachers' Home which Wesley had established in her native city. Here he met her frequently, and ere long formed for her a warm attachment. He did not, however, reveal to her his feeling toward her, and the relation between them remained entirely official. She regarded him with affectionate reverence, but did not dream of the possibility of his becoming a lover. Meanwhile John Bennet, one of Wesley's preachers and a man of means, education, and reputable social position, made known his affection for her and asked her to become his wife. But being inclined to continue the work in which she had become deeply interested, she put him off for two years. Finally, however, in 1749, he pressed his suit with such urgency that she agreed to marry him if Wesley would give his consent. Wesley was at this moment just on the point of setting out for Ireland, and requested her to go with him in order that she might assist him in organizing and training the bands in the various societies. They were gone four or five months, and, as she had not heard from

Bennet during all this time, she seems to have concluded that his love for her had waned. On their return to England, as they were on their way from London to Lincolnshire, they unexpectedly met Bennet; and as there was still no renewal of his love-making, Wesley evidently decided that the way was clear, and so the very next day he proposed to Mrs. Murray. The rest may be told in her own words: "The next day we came together, and now Mr. Wesley declared his passion for me, which he had conquered too long. For all the years that I was under his care he behaved to me as a tender father in every respect, and I looked up to him and obeyed him as a father. I can say, as in the sight of God, I could have gone with him to prison or death. I traveled with him by sea and land, and was not dismayed, neither was I afraid of any danger. Notwithstanding, I blame him for concealing his affection for me as a lover. When he mentioned it to me I was as much surprised as if the moon had dropped out of her orbit, for I thought he would never marry. I was now between two fires, but was gone too far with Mr. Bennet to turn back."

Nevertheless she did show not a little hesitation, and would probably have married Wesley after all but for the officious meddling of Charles Wesley, who, for some reason, was much opposed to the union. He seems not only to have pressed upon her the duty of marrying Bennet, but also to have urged certain reasons why she should not marry his brother. It is not strange that under such pressure she finally yielded. She was married to Bennet October 3, 1749. Her subsequent life was altogether in keeping with her

previous reputation as a woman of pure and exalted character. "All we know of her," says Riggs, "would lead to the conclusion that she would have been not an unworthy helpmeet of John Wesley."

This experience was without doubt the most painful of Wesley's life. For once he broke over his usual habit of reserve and poured out his grief in a beautiful and passionate poem. Then, with his wonted magnanimity, he frankly forgave all concerned and calmly went about his work.

Many years later one of Mrs. Bennet's sons became minister of a chapel in the Pavement, in Moorfields. While she was visiting him in 1778 Thomas Olivers met her and informed Wesley that she desired to see him. Henry Moore gives an interesting account of the meeting: "Mr. Wesley, with evident feeling, resolved to visit her, and the next morning he took me with him to Colebrooke Row, where her son then resided. The meeting was affecting, but Mr. Wesley preserved more than his usual self-possession. It was easy to see, notwithstanding the many years that had intervened, that both in sweetness of spirit and in person and manner she was a fit subject for the tender regrets expressed in those verses which I have presented to the reader. The interview did not continue long, and I do not remember that I ever heard Mr. Wesley mention her name afterwards."

An entry in Wesley's Journal made a little more than a year after the affair with Mrs. Murray shows that he had made up his mind that it was his duty to marry. The occasion of his finally taking the step which proved so unfortunate was an accident which

befell him in February, 1751, and which temporarily disabled him. As he was hastening from the Foundry to Snowfields to take leave of the congregation before starting on his journey to the north, his foot slipped on the ice and he fell with great force, his ankle striking on the top of a stone. While waiting to recover from the result of this mishap he took up his quarters at the home of Mrs. Vazeile, in Threadneedle Street, and the outcome was that she and Wesley were married at the end of a week. Mrs. Vazeile was a widow with four children and a fortune of fifty thousand dollars, which Wesley took care to have settled on herself and her children. Wesley's union with her was inexcusably hasty and ill considered. Mrs. Wesley proved to be a typical termagant. Besides being utterly incapable of sympathizing with her husband in his work, she was narrow, suspicious, and passionate. She kept him under continual surveillance, and was often driven to such unreasonable extremes by her foolish and groundless jealousy that we are almost forced to the conclusion that she was actually insane. She circulated vile reports about him, stole his private letters, and, after changing and interpolating words, put them into the hands of his enemies, and in some instances even went to the extent of offering him physical violence. Southey says of her that she "deserves to be classed in a triad with Xantippe and the wife of Job as one of the three typical bad wives of the world." Of course such an experience to a man of Wesley's temper and in Wesley's position must have been an unspeakable sorrow and humiliation; and yet through it all he not only conducted himself with

prudence, but showed that large mananimity which was always one of his striking characteristics. He did not permit it to cloud his cheerfulness or to cause him to relax the energy with which he prosecuted his work. The following record appears in his Journal of June 23, 1771: "For what cause I know not my wife set out for Newcastle, purposing 'never to return.' *Non eam reliqui, non dimisi, non revocabo.*" He did not recall her, but she came back uninvited, as appears from a note in his Journal for June, 1772. They were finally parted, however, during the later years of her life. The last mention of her in his Journal is dated October 12, 1781: "I came to London and learned that my wife died on Monday." Whatever heart pangs may have been occasioned by the reflections awakened by this announcement were kept sacredly hidden in his own bosom.

CHAPTER XVII.

At the End of the Journey.

I.

Wesley preserved his intellectual and physical vigor far beyond the period of life after which the Psalmist declares that the pride of most of us becomes "labor and sorrow." He had a way after he began to grow old of taking a kind of physical reckoning on each recurring birthday, in order to determine just how the case stood with him. Year after year he records in his Journal that, though long past his three-score and ten, his eye is not dimmed nor his natural strength abated. The last record of this kind is dated June 28, 1786. "I am now entered," he says, "into the eighty-third year of my age. I am a wonder to myself. It is now twelve years since I have felt any such sensation as weariness. I am never tired, such is the goodness of God, either with writing, preaching, or traveling." Two years later he notes for the first time a number of signs of waning vitality. He is less agile than in times past, his sight is a little decayed, and he has daily some pain in his right eye and temple, and also in his right shoulder and arm. He finds likewise some decay in his memory; but he can still travel and preach without weariness, and has lost none of his readiness in writing sermons. At the next entry he says, "I now find I grow old," and then proceeds in true scientific fashion to enumerate the signs of decay. He concludes with this striking observation: "What I should be afraid of is, if I took thought for

the morrow, that my body should weigh down my mind and create either stubbornness by the decrease of my understanding or peevishness by the increase of bodily infirmities; but thou shalt answer for me, O Lord my God."

Thereafter he refers more frequently to his increasing infirmities. There is a deep pathos in these later records, but the old note of courage still lingers, and with cheerfulness unabated and heart unafraid he faces the great change. On the first day of January, 1790, he makes this entry: "I am now an old man, decayed from head to foot. My eyes are dim, my right hand shakes much, my mouth is hot and dry every morning. I have a lingering fever almost every day. However, blessed be God, I do not slack my labor. I can preach and write still." And so he goes cheerily, bravely on in his loved employ, traveling from place to place, meeting the classes, giving wise counsel to his helpers, writing letters and sermons, and proclaiming the old-time message with the old-time enthusiasm to the vast congregations that gather to hear him wherever he goes. His itinerary for the last five months of his life would appear formidable to the most courageous presiding elder in our modern Methodism.

His mind is still active and his interest in things unabated. He still reads all sorts of books, still finds delight in the beauty of nature and in great works of art, and is still tenderly concerned for his friends, as is shown by letters of affectionate counsel which he continues to write until the very end. Charles Atmore, after hearing him preach at Darlington in May,

1790, wrote: "He appears very feeble, and no wonder, he being nearly eighty-seven years of age. His sight has failed so much that he cannot see to give out the hymn; yet his voice is strong and his spirits remarkably lively. Surely this good and great man is the prodigy of the present age." Five months later the poet Crabbe was one of his hearers at Lowestoft, and was greatly struck with his reverend appearance, his air of serene cheerfulness, and the beautiful cadence he gave to some lines which he quoted from Anacreon. During these last years he was probably the most widely known and the most generally revered and honored private citizen in the United Kingdom. In his Journal for January 26, 1777, he speaks of having preached twice on a certain Sunday at Allhallows Church, in London, to quiet and attentive congregations, and adds: "It seems, after being scandalous for near fifty years, I am, at length, growing into an honorable man!" Later on he records the fact that he now has more invitations to preach in churches than he can possibly accept. In another place he tells about preaching at Falmouth. Forty years had elapsed since his last visit there, and then he was "taken prisoner by an immense mob, gaping and roaring like lions; now high and low lined the streets from one end of the town to the other out of stark love and kindness."

No life ever had a calmer or a brighter evening. "Such unclouded sunshine of the breast," writes Alexander Knox, "in the deepest winter of age and on the felt verge of eternity bespoke a mind whose recollections were as unsullied as its present sensations were serene. It seemed to verify to the letter the weighty

words of the Psalmist: "Keep innocency, and take heed unto the thing that is right: for that shall bring a man peace at the last.' "

II.

For many years it was Wesley's custom to leave London about the first of March for the north of Ireland. In February, 1791, he was in the city preparing to start on his usual journey. He even went so far as to send his chaise and horses before him to Bristol and to engage passage for himself and his friends in the Bath coach. As the time for his departure drew near, however, it became evident that his bodily strength was fast failing, although he continued to work as usual. He preached in City Road Chapel for the last time Tuesday, February 22. The next morning, after his lifelong custom, he rose at four o'clock and, in company with a friend, set out for Leatherhead, eighteen miles from London, to visit a magistrate, in whose dining room he preached his last sermon, his text being, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near." On that same day he wrote his last letter, which was addressed to Wilberforce and in which he encourages Wilberforce to persevere in his propaganda against slavery, which he characterizes as "that execrable villainy which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature." On returning to his home at City Road the next day, he went to his room and requested to be left alone for half an hour. His faithful friend, Joseph Bradford, on going to his apartment a little later, found his symptoms so serious that he sent at once for Dr. Whitehead. Thereafter, in spite of all

that tender nursing and medical skill could do, his strength continued gradually to fail. At times his mind would wander, and then he would be back in the work in which he had been so long engaged, preaching and meeting classes. On Tuesday, March 1, after spending a restless night, he was asked by a friend if he suffered any pain. He answered promptly "No," and then began singing the beautiful hymn,

> "All glory to God in the sky,
> And peace upon earth be restored."

The song being finished, he expressed a desire to write, and a pen was put in his hand and paper placed before him. But his hand had lost its cunning. Seeing that he was unable to carry out his wish, Miss Ritchie proposed to write for him, and asked him to tell her what he wished to say. "Nothing," replied the dying saint, "but that God is with us."

Then he expressed a desire to get up; and while his friends were arranging for him to do so he began singing that glad triumphal song, "I'll praise my Maker while I've breath."

When seated in a chair, he said in a weak voice: "Lord, thou givest strength to those that can speak and to those that cannot. Speak, Lord, to all our hearts, and let them know that thou loosest tongues." Again he attempted to sing, but his voice failed; and after gasping for breath, he said: "Now we have done, let us go hence." After he had been returned to his bed and had had a few moments of quiet sleep, he asked Joseph Bradford about the key and contents of his bureau, remarking: "I would have all things ready

for my executors. Let me be buried in nothing but what is woolen, and let my corpse be carried in my coffin into the chapel." Later in the day he managed, with much difficulty, to make his friends understand that he wanted his sermon on "The Love of God to Fallen Man" to be "scattered abroad and given to everybody." Then summoning all his strength, he exclaimed with a clear, triumphant voice: "The best of all is, God is with us." During the ensuing night he repeated again and again the words, "I'll praise, I'll praise," but could go no farther. It was Wednesday, March 2, at 10 o'clock in the morning when the noble old hero, after bidding his friends an affectionate farewell, quietly fell asleep. One week later he was buried at the fitting hour of five o'clock in the morning behind the chapel in City Road.